the 25 BEST SPORTS BARS IN AMERICA

Where Will You Watch The Super Bowl?

Sports Illustrated

PREVIEW XXXIX

Mind Game

The Thinking Man's Super Bowl

BY PETER KING

Belichick and Brady go after No. 3

JOY IN ILLINOIS

The nation's most exciting backcourt has its eye on the NCAA title

BY GRANT WAHL

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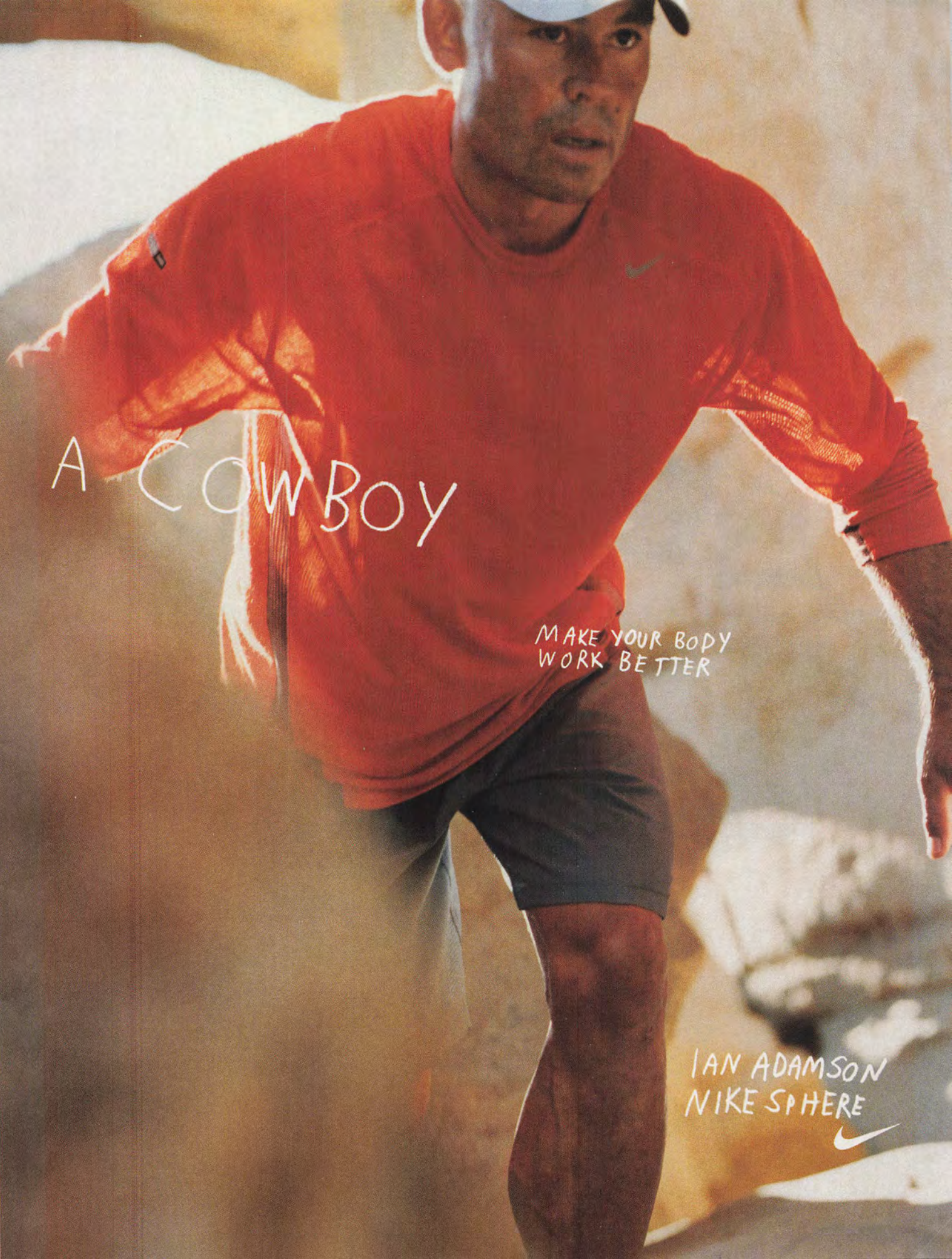
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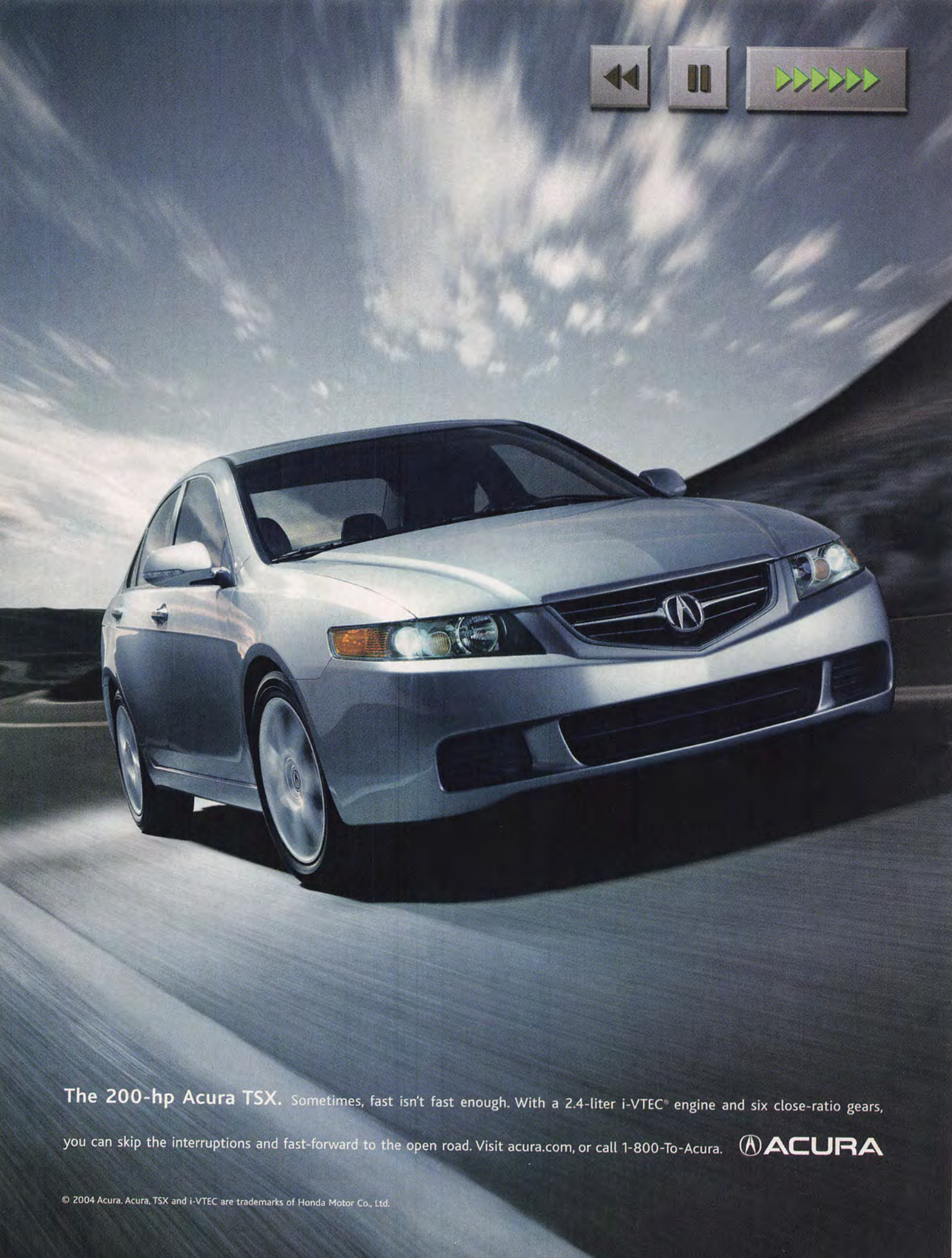

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Sports Illustrated
FEBRUARY 7, 2005
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Cover

PHOTOGRAPH BY
BOB ROSATO

SPORTS BARS ILLUSTRATION: MIRKO ILLIC

SI Extra

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MICHAEL J. LEBRECHT II/IDEUCE3; MIRKO ILLIC (COCKTAIL GLASS)

Leading Off

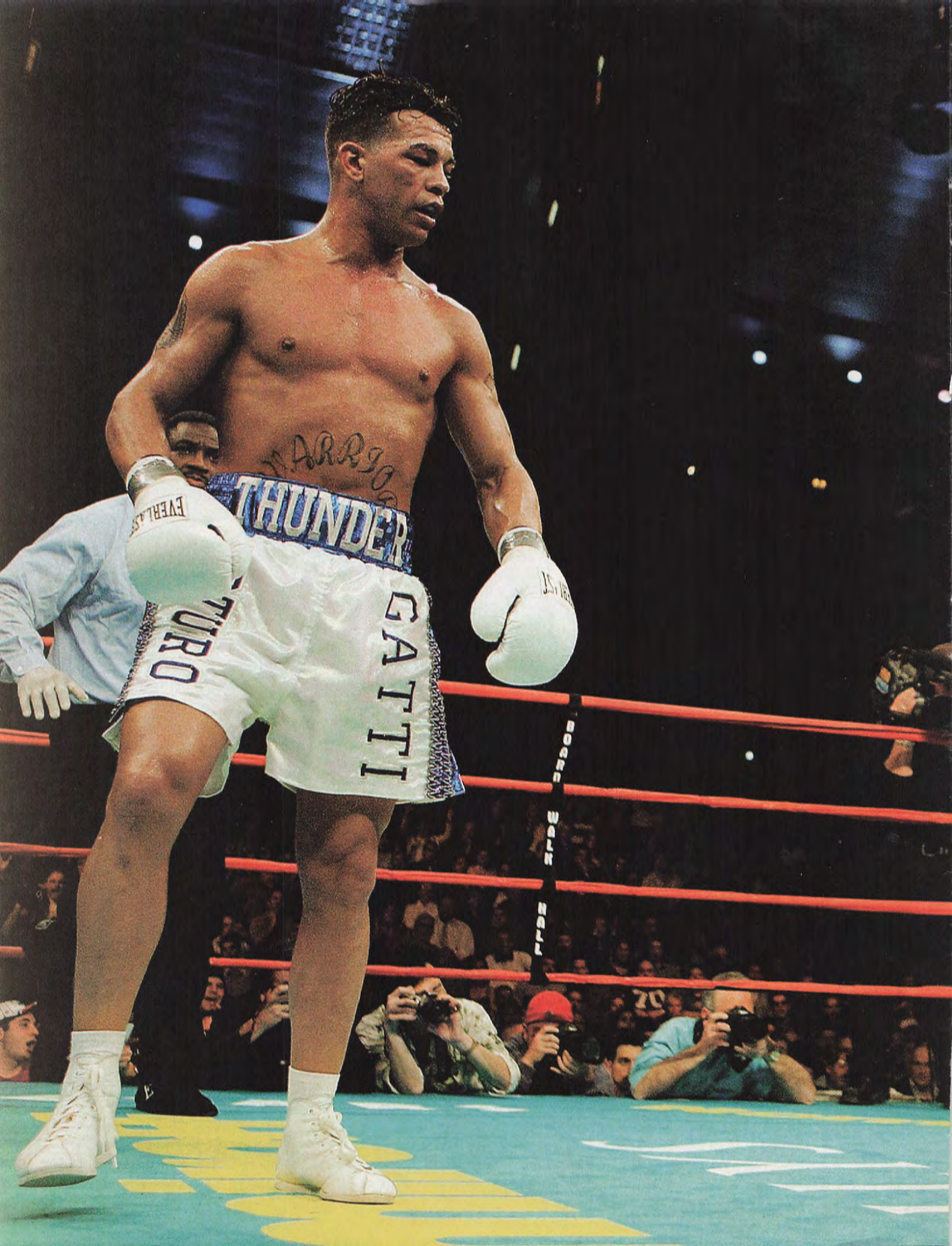
CLIVE BRUNSKILL/GETTY IMAGES

Up Down Under

Serena Williams has enough left for a leap of joy after defeating Maria Sharapova in the Australian Open semifinals in Melbourne last Thursday; she beat Lindsay Davenport in the final, while Marat Safin (left) beat Lleyton Hewitt in four sets to take the men's title on Sunday (page 62).

Photograph by Jon Buckle/Empics

For daily Web-only Leading Off galleries, go to **SI.com/scorecard**.


THUNDER
CATTI
TURO

Leading Off

Thunderous

Arturo (Thunder) Gatti admires his handiwork after a flurry of fifth-round blows (right) sent "Jesse" James Leija to the canvas in their WBC junior welterweight championship bout in Atlantic City last Saturday night. Gatti won in a fifth-round knockout.

Photographs by
Al Bello/Getty Images

RIGHT GUARD
WINTER
GAMES
RIGHT GUARD

Leading Off

Timber Line

The snowboarders got big air in the X Games men's finals in Aspen on Saturday (above), which was won by Xavier de le Rue; the skiers were also flying in the X men's semifinals (right).

Photographs by Brian Bahr/Getty Images

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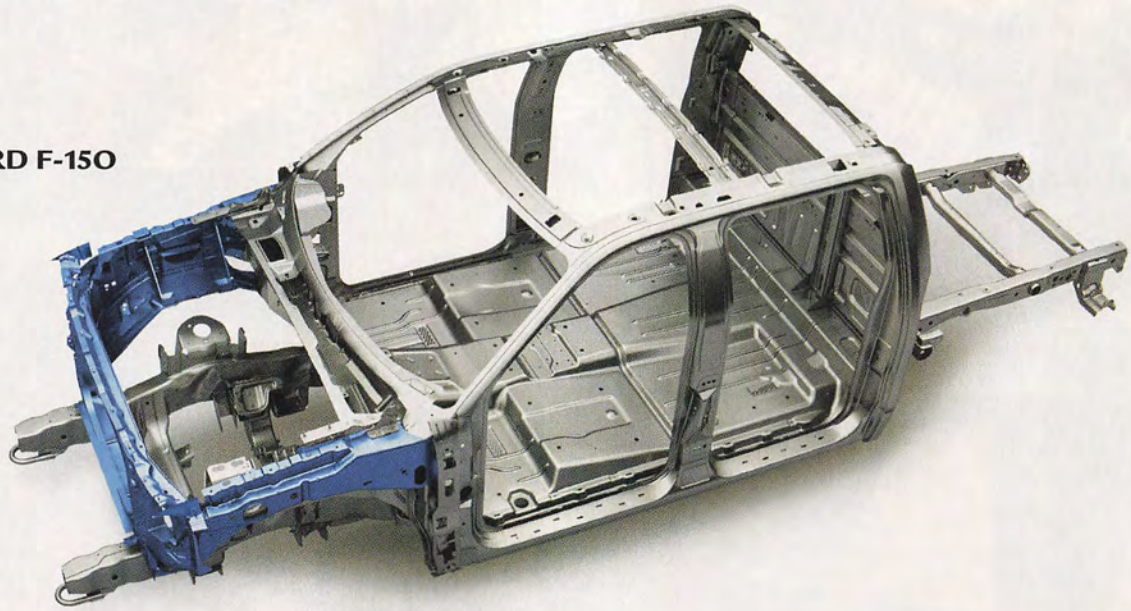

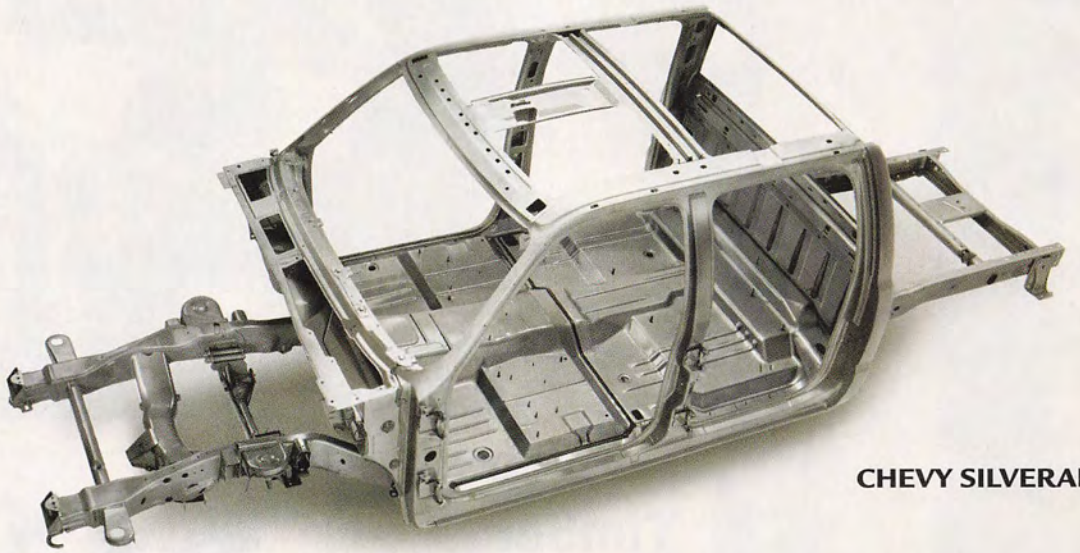

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2005 F-150

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Face Off

How about you stop putting people on the cover of SI? On the Jan. 17 cover is Indianapolis wideout Reggie Wayne. On Jan. 16, two days after I received the issue, the Colts lost to the New England Patriots. Last year Donovan McNabb appeared on the cover (Jan. 19, 2004) just before the NFC title game. Philadelphia lost to the Carolina Panthers—I was not upset, because I am a Carolina fan. The following week, Jan. 26, the Panthers were on the cover, and as we all know, they lost by a field goal in the Super Bowl. The smartest move you ever made was when you decided to make a collage of all 65 teams for the NCAA basketball tournament. I would stop putting a single person or team on the cover, at least before playoff games.

Gideon Rosenthal, Charleston, S.C.

Golden Age?

Grant Wahl writes of college basketball, "TV ratings are up and so is the quality of play" (*Hoops Renaissance*, Jan. 17). Wahl in part used as evidence Kansas' 65–59 win over Kentucky, providing plenty of details about Ashley Judd but failing to mention that the game was a horror show of terrible shot selection and turnovers. Kansas was 21 of 53 from the field (39.6%), including 4 of 16 from three-point range, and had 21 turnovers. Kentucky shot 21 of 68 (30.9%), including 6 of 26 from beyond the arc, and had 13 turnovers. I think Wahl has officially joined the Packer-Vitale brigade of those who blindly praise college basketball because that is where their bread is buttered. Many of us who still love the college game can tell the obvious truth: It isn't as good as it once was.

Chris Ekstrand, Rossford, Ohio

Man of Steel

Let me get this straight: Bill Cowher—who happens to be the longest-tenured head coach in the NFL at age 47 and who has reached five AFC title games with three different quarterbacks—is not one of the hopeless workaholics sadly described in SCORECARD (Jan. 17) as "OD'ing on OT" but instead is a man who is devoted to his family (LIFE OF REILLY, Jan. 17)? How refreshing to cheer for someone whose success hasn't come at the price of neglected spouses and children. I am eagerly looking forward to at least 13 more years with Cowher at the helm in the Steel City.

Shawn Buehler, Columbia, Md.

As a formerly long-suffering Patriots fan, I recall basking in the joy of the Pats' win over the Steelers in Pittsburgh on Jan. 27, 2002. My team was going to the Super Bowl, baby! Then the TV cameras showed three pretty girls crying and their mother trying to console them. The announcer said it was Cowher's family. It was then I realized there are always two sides to every victory, and I wasn't quite as joyful. Now that those girls are athletes themselves, they probably know that whether they win or lose, the sun will rise, life will go on, and their father will be the one watching in the stands with tears in his eyes.

Stephen Desjardins, Orlando

As a father of three daughters myself, I completely understand Coach Cowher's feelings about his girls. One of the toughest parts of being away is not being able to attend, or help coach, their various sports activities. Hey, all you athletes and coaches who produce children and then ignore them—pay attention to what life is really about.

Lieut. Col. Wayne A. Wolverton
U.S. Army, Camp Slayer, Iraq

Fan Pan

I was confused and saddened by the LEADING OFF (Jan. 17) picture of Jermaine O'Neal, who had pledged $1,000 for every point he scored to tsunami relief victims, trying to shoot a free throw while being distracted by San Antonio Spurs fans. I have been tough in my attitude toward NBA players, but if the fans in San Antonio waving their inflatable tokens of selfishness are representative of what NBA players have to deal with every night, I owe those players an apology.

Dave Stedman, Birmingham

Delayed Gratification

When I went back home recently, my father handed me a plastic-wrapped issue of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED. He said, "Give this to your brother, it came in the mail last week. Take a look at the date." The issue was from Dec. 7, 1981, and the cover featured Tony Dorsett of the Dallas Cowboys. Addressed to my brother, it arrived in perfect condition—I couldn't believe it—23 years after it was sent.

Christine Murphy, Monroe, N.Y.

December 7, 1981

November 8, 1993

As I leafed through my incoming mail in my office yesterday afternoon, I came across an issue of SI—which was unusual because my subscription goes to my home address. Furthermore the cover showed Alonzo Mourning and Bill Russell, and it touted Mourning "and other young stars" as "The Now Generation." It was part of the NBA Preview Issue for the 1993–94 season (Nov. 8, 1993)! While I have heard of postal service delays, I have never before experienced anything like an 11-year, 2-month and 16-day wait for a magazine to arrive. Maybe my '93 tax refund will arrive in the mail next week.

Robert W. Harrison, San Diego

EDITOR'S NOTE: The United States Postal Service apologizes for the delays.

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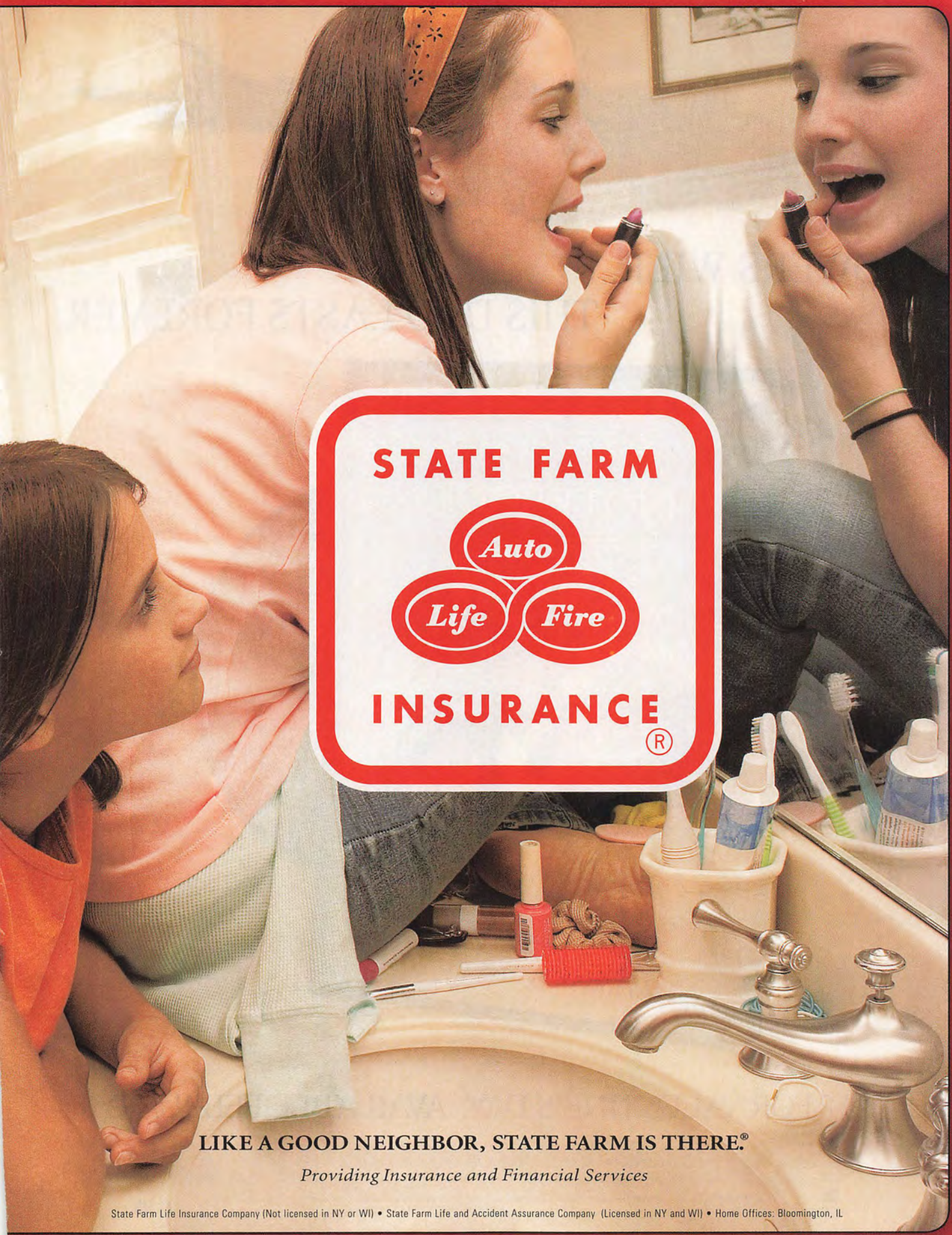

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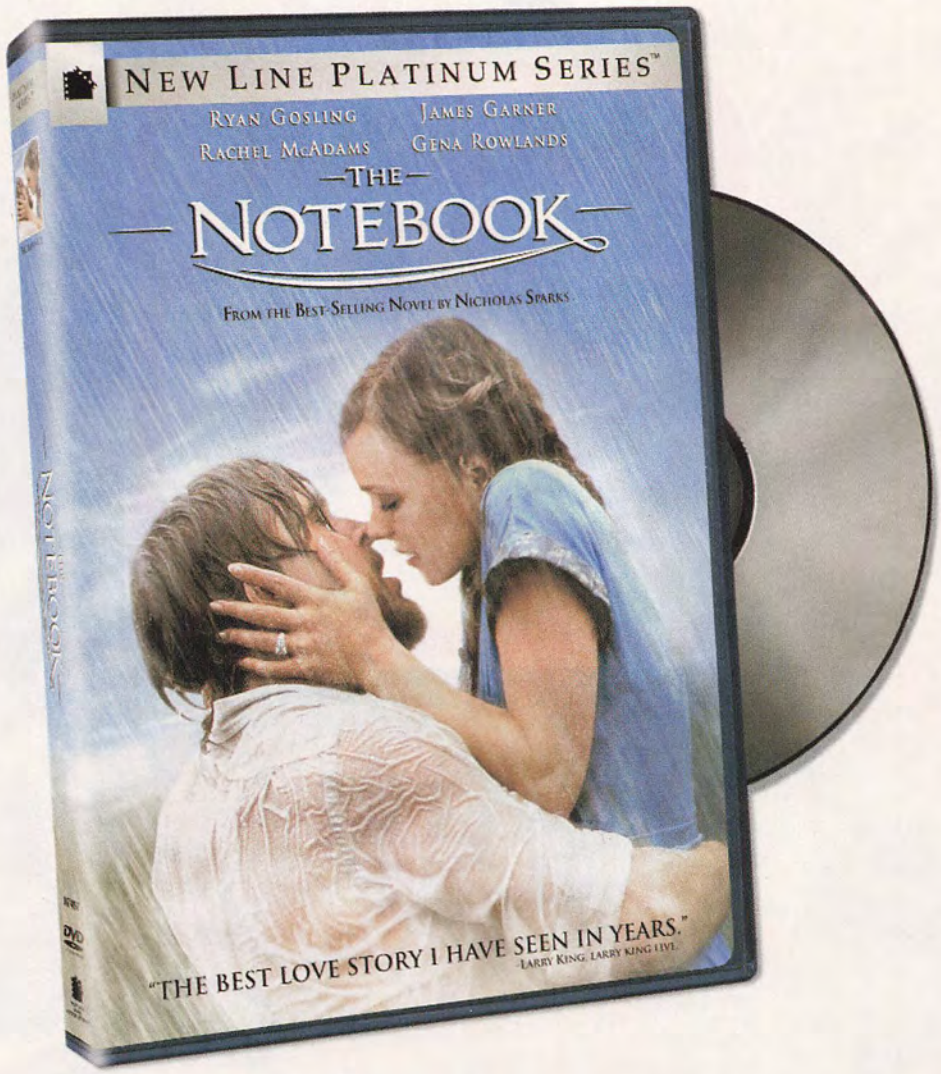

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PG-13 SOME SEXUALITY

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The Last of Carnac

by Steve Rushin

PLEASE WELCOME, one final time, that mysterious visitor from the East—seer, sage, soothsayer—Carnac the Magnificent, who will ascertain, in his divine and mystical way, the answers to your sports questions without ever having seen them. Are you ready, O Great One?

Carnac: May a love-starved fruit fly molest your sister's nectarines*.

A: Rednecks.
Q: What does Red Auerbach do at the drive-in?

A: Purdue.
Q: How do you pay the person who cleans up after your dog?

A: Swimsuit issues.
Q: What does Rick Majerus have every summer?

A: Puff pastries.
Q: What does Ricky Williams try to do at Dunkin' Donuts?

A: Airballs.
Q: What do Cockney cats cough up?

A: A.J. Feeley.
Q: Name one reason not *to stand near A.J. Foyt on the subway.*

A: Misnomer.
Q: What does Mia do when her husband is away?

A: Tedy Bruschi.
Q: List two things you see together at a Kennedy family picnic.

A: Nosetackle.
Q: What's the fastest way to bring down Barbra Streisand?

May a nearsighted sand fly suck the syrup off your short stack.

A: The can-can.
Q: Where does Bron-Bron go pee-pee?

A: Neverland.
Q: What do you say to the pilot for the New Orleans Hornets?

A: Around the horn.
Q: Where's the worst place to punch a rhino?

A: Brown-eyed girl.
Q: What did Kwame do while riding the bench?

A: Jack be nimble, Jack be quick.
Q: Recite Moses Malone's scouting report on Jack Sikma.

A: Junior Seau.
Q: What does the younger Griffey do when you step on his foot?

A: The Cat in the Hat.
Q: What does Rickey Henderson call Pope John Paul II?

A: Karl Marx.
Q: What will Carmelo Anthony soon have across 90% of his body?

May a desert weirdo lower his figs into your mother's soup.

A: Puffy Combs.
Q: What does Randy Moss use on his Afro?

A: Pats-Eagles.
Q: What does a lonely ornithologist do?

A: Chubby Checker.
Q: Describe every NHL player after the lockout.

A: Halfback.
Q: What do you get after lending Don King 20 bucks?

A: W.C. Fields.
Q: What do Europeans call Flushing Meadows?

> One final time, that mysterious visitor from the East will ascertain the answers to your sports questions without ever having seen them.

A: Barry Bonds.
Q: What's better advice for investors who put cash under the mattress?

A: Safecracker.
Q: What do umps say to John Rocker when he slides under the tag at second?

May a sandstorm blow up during your vasectomy.

A: Boo-boo.
Q: What do Siamese twins do in Philadelphia?

A: Hey, Hey, Hey, Goodbye.
Q: What does Fat Albert say when leaving a room?

A: Fan clubs.
Q: What does Ron Artest keep in his trunk?

A: Minnie Driver.
Q: What did Corey Pavin lend to Ian Woosnam?

A: Tara Lipinski.
Q: What's the worst thing an athlete can do to his Lipinski?

(*Insults were originally uttered by Carnac himself, the late, great Johnny Carson. Godspeed, Carnac. May a weird holy man, a diseased yak and an unclean camel carry you into eternity.) □

For a collection of Steve Rushin's columns, go to **SI.com/writers.**

SIMON BRUTY; CHRIS HASTON/NBC/AP (TURBAN)

Sports Illustrated

Edited by
MARK BECHTEL AND
STEPHEN CANNELLA

"Jamal Lewis should be released

Scorec

Over and Out

Slammin' Sammy Sosa? It's become a favorite pastime in Chicago, where disillusionment with the slugger forced the Cubs to all but give him away **By Tom Verducci**

IN MID-JANUARY, after the Chicago Cubs essentially put their winter business on hold for three months while trying in vain to trade outfielder Sammy Sosa, Cubs president Andy MacPhail and Adam Katz, Sosa's agent, began discussing the damage control needed to bring Sosa back. There was talk of hiring public relations people with expertise in crisis management, a long past overdue meeting between manager Dusty Baker and Sosa, and the possibility of Sosa's addressing his teammates in spring training. It all smacked of trying to glue together a porcelain vase that had smashed into hundreds of pieces. The beauty was gone, and the awkward attempt at restoration would serve only as a mockery.

Truth is, Sosa's iconic 13-year run as a Cub ended the day he walked out on his teammates while they played the final game of the 2004 season. The Cubs knew it. Sosa knew it. There was no going back, especially when the team bloodied him in a p.r. war, announcing they had stadium surveillance tapes to prove he lied about when he left. And then Sosa dashed off to a European vacation to let the mess curdle, but not before ripping Baker for dropping him down in the batting order.

It took until last weekend and a last-gasp deal for the confirmation: The Cubs agreed to give the Baltimore Orioles $12 million to take Sosa off their hands. (Baltimore will pay the remaining $9.5 million of his 2005 salary.) In return the Cubs accepted Jerry Hairston Jr., a 28-year-old multiposition player who does nothing exceptionally well, and two minor leaguers. A baseball source said Chicago planned to sign vagabond outfielder Jeromy Burnitz to replace Sosa.

Sosa was just as eager to get the deal done: He waived his no-trade clause as well as a guaranteed $18 million salary for 2006 and got nothing in return. Sosa and Katz may indeed begin negotiations soon on a two-year extension for Sosa with Baltimore, but those talks are not part of the conditions of the trade. "He understood that the Cubs felt the relationship had run its course, and he reluctantly agreed," Katz said on Sunday.

Remember this: Sosa is the Cubs' alltime home run leader, is the only man in history to hit 60 homers in a season three times and, for many a day since he became a Cub in 1992, actually surpassed the warm sun and cold beer as the most compelling reason to go to Wrigley Field. You went to see Sosa make that exuberant dash to rightfield in the top of the first and that wing-flapping home run hop at the plate the way you went to see Old Faithful gush at Yellowstone. He satisfied thousands whether or not the Cubs won.

All that seemed forgotten among the dry-eyed Chicagoans who bid Sosa good riddance. As

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from prison in time for training camp.

—FOR THE RECORD, PAGE 22

ard

ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF WONG; COURTESY COSENTINO USA (RODMAN)

Rick Telander wrote in Sunday's *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Never in my life have I seen an athlete go from being the heart and soul and spirit of a team to an utter pariah—without point-shaving or outright felonious crime involved—as swiftly as I have with Sammy."

The Cubs grew tired of his act—never mind that his act is essentially the same as it was when he served as baseball's cuddly ambassador during the Great Home Run Race of 1998: the entourage, the boom box monopolizing clubhouse air space, the late spring training arrivals and the constant need for pampering. The maintenance of his celebrity grew burdensome as Cubs culture lost its lovableness; Wrigley fans demand wins with their beer now. And Sosa, 35, declined at the plate during the last three years, a period marked by a serious beaning and a corked bat incident. (To that list the suspicious might also add baseball's crackdown on steroids.)

The Cubs are not better off without his bat—he did smack 35 home runs last year even while missing a month with an injured back—but they are better off without his baggage, just as the Red Sox were without a brooding Nomar Garciaparra last year. And Sosa landed in a prime place for career rehab: a middle-market team with a franchise player already in place (fellow Dominican Miguel Tejada), a fresh set of fans with no postseason expectations, a beautiful ballpark and the luxury of the DH spot.

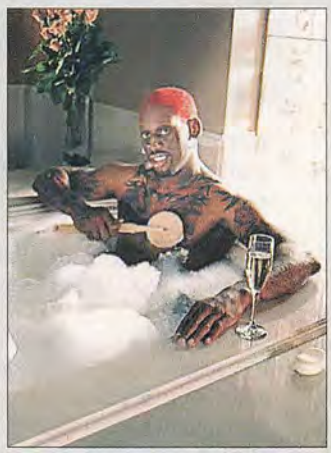
Sosa had to go. Baker couldn't reach him, and several teammates, many of whom never played with him at his best, chafed at what they regarded as the selfishness of the team captain. It was not one incident that caused the expiration of his goodwill, but the last dripped with cinematic perfection. Upon Sosa's premature exit from Wrigley last October somebody in the clubhouse smashed his boom box to bits. The day the music died.

Sunday Best

Randy was dandy on last year's Super Bowl broadcast, but advertisers and network execs are now promising a cleaner show

Janet Jackson's breast was hardly the only controversial image viewers of Super Bowl XXXVIII were subjected to. In addition to spots for erectile-dysfunction drugs, CBS's ad lineup featured a dog biting a man's crotch, a football player with toilet paper stuck to his backside and a flatulent Clydesdale. Don't expect to be offended in quite the same way this Sunday. "Are we going to see horse farts?" says University of Detroit Mercy marketing professor Michael Bernacchi. "Probably not."

The fallout from Jackson's halftime wardrobe malfunction has network execs and advertisers more aware of the line between clever and tacky. Earlier this month Fox told makers of the cold remedy Airborne that the network wouldn't air an ad that had a glimpse of 84-year-old Mickey Rooney's bare behind. After gauging the reaction from 800 focus-group participants, Anheuser-Busch pulled an ad that suggested Jackson's exposure was caused by a stagehand opening a beer with her bustier. (The company will air 10 other spots during the game.) And Levitra, one of the ED medications that advertised last year, is not expected to return. (Cialis, last year's other ED advertiser, is expected to air an ad.) Says Bernacchi, "We're still in a toned-down environment. Last year's belly laughs won't be repeated." Here's what you *can* look for:



CLEANING UP Super Bowl ads won't get much more risqué than Rodman's Cosentino spot.

- **Car ads.** The 2006 Super Bowl will be played in Detroit, and auto companies are getting excited as Super Bowl XL draws closer. For the first time, three carmakers—Honda, Lincoln Mercury and Volvo—will air at least 60 seconds of ads.
- **Faces from the past.** Among the pitchmen on Sunday are Burt Reynolds (FedEx), M.C. Hammer (Frito-Lay) and Mike Ditka and Dennis Rodman (Cosentino countertops). Diet Pepsi will bring back Cindy Crawford, who spoke for the soda in the '90s.
- **Movies.** Several studios will hype new releases, including *The Pacifier*, *War of the Worlds* and *Hitch*. Among them they've purchased at least six 30-second spots for a total of $14.4 million—or $2.4 million more than the budget of *Sideways*.

Running on Empty

An Olympic champ struggles to focus on racing following the death of his fiancée

IN HIS much-anticipated U.S. debut, Kenenisa Bekele, the world's top distance runner, showed how difficult it is to run with a heavy heart. Competing in his first race since the death of his fiancée one month ago, the Ethiopian, who was the 10,000-meter gold medalist in Athens, briefly slowed to a jog after the 14th of 15 laps, thinking he had won the 3,000-meter race at the Boston Indoor Games last Saturday. By the time Bekele realized his mistake, Ireland's Alistair Cragg had passed him. Bekele tried to rally, but he crossed the line in second place in 7:41.42, 1.67 seconds behind Cragg. "My head was not on the track," Bekele said afterward, "because my heart is still with Alem."

Bekele, 22, had planned to marry Alem Techale, 18, in May. But during a training run on Jan. 4 in the forests of Ararat, near the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, Techale, a world junior champ at 1,500 meters, suddenly collapsed. Bekele carried her to his car, but she died on the way to a hospital. Bekele said he thought the cause of death was heart-related, though

LOST Grieving Techale (right), Bekele (above) was beaten by Cragg.

doctors, in keeping with Ethiopian custom, didn't performed an autopsy.

"Honestly I did not want to run again. Ever," Bekele said after Saturday's race. "What is the point of all these glories if you can no longer share them with your great love? But the public embraced me, and her parents said she would want me to run in her honor." Bekele had gone into seclusion to mourn and had resumed training only a week before the race. He shaved on Friday morning for the first time since the tragedy, having observed the custom of growing a beard in memory of a lost loved one. "During training, I was not really focused," he said. "I was used to training with my fiancée, and without her it was not the same."

Roughly 100 people among the 3,500 fans at the Reggie Lewis Center waved Ethiopian flags and chanted a song in the Amharic language that hailed Bekele as a "brave warrior." And the crowd observed a moment of silence for Techale before the start. But in the race Bekele looked nothing like the commanding runner who last year set world records in the 5,000 and 10,000 meters nine days apart and was named world athlete of the year by both *Track and Field News* and the IAAF. "I am half the man without Alem," he said. "I honestly do not know if I can ever be the same runner again."

—Brian Cazeneuve

Go Figure

2 Wins by the Knicks in 14 games after Stephon Marbury proclaimed himself the NBA's best point guard.

1 Game East Carolina athletes will have to sit out after two unexcused absences from class under the athletic department's new attendance policy.

$1 million Amount donated by former NFL coach Chuck Knox to endow a history chair at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., his alma mater.

60 Minutes before scheduled tip-off that the Hawks, who were stranded by an Atlanta ice storm, arrived in Memphis for last Saturday's game against the Grizzlies; the tip was delayed, and the Hawks lost 84–83.

$2,500 Value of the Stanford tree-mascot costume, which was stolen last week for the third time in two months.

BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS (BEKELE); MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES (TECHALE)

WHEN IN MIAMI...
SHAQ
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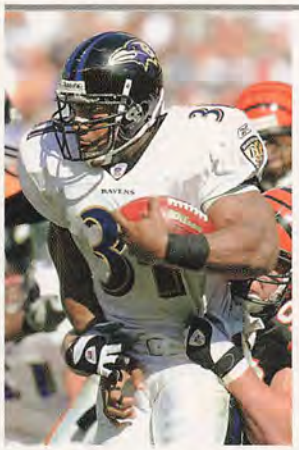
For the Record



Sentenced To four months in federal prison, Ravens running back Jamal Lewis, who pleaded guilty in October to using a cellphone to try to set up a cocaine deal in 2000. Lewis, who originally faced more serious conspiracy charges, could have been hit with at least a 10-year sentence if convicted at trial, and under federal guidelines he could have received six to 12 months for the crime he pleaded to. But U.S. district judge Orinda Evans let him off easy, in part, she said, because prosecutors had a weak case and there was a "very high" probability that a jury would have acquitted him. (The judge recommended that he serve his time at a federal prison camp in Alabama.) Lewis, who underwent ankle surgery last month and appeared in court on crutches, should be released in time for the beginning of training camp in July. Said Lewis, "I'm truly sorry for what I did."

Fired By the ABA's Nashville Rhythm, Ashley McElhiney, the first woman to coach a professional men's basketball team. McElhiney, 23, was axed after an argument with co-owner Sally Anthony during a win over the Kansas City Knights last Saturday. Before the game, Anthony told McElhiney not to play forward Matt Freije because she thought other players resented his playing time. McElhiney ignored the order, and in the third quarter Anthony stormed onto the court and tried to fire her on the spot. Anthony was hauled off the floor by security guards; after the game she announced that McElhiney was out. Cooler heads eventually prevailed: On Monday league chairman Joe Newman told SI that McElhiney would get her job back.

Filed By Heat forward Wesley Person, a grievance with the NBA players' union accusing the team of wrongfully placing him on the injured list. Miami shelved Person last week, saying he had right-knee tendinitis. Person claims he's healthy—even though he approved the move. His excuse: "They called me when I was taking my nap. . . . Once I woke up and came to my senses, I was like, Hold on now."

Fired After 18 seasons, Peabody (Mass.) High baseball coach Ed Nizwantowski. Officials didn't specify a reason for Nizwantowski's removal, but under his watch—he's also the football coach—several former Peabody athletes, including Marlins minor league pitcher Jeff Allison, have admitted to being addicted to prescription painkillers (SI, Dec. 20, 2004). Nizwantowski still holds his football position, but the school said it will begin accepting applicants for that job later this year.

Died Former heavyweight boxer and actor Coley Wallace, of heart failure at age 77. Wallace didn't amount to much as a pro (he was 20-7-0), but as an amateur in 1948 he knocked out Rocky Marciano, handing the future champ the only loss of his career. Wallace was also known for his resemblance to Joe Louis. In 1953—with cotton stuffed in his cheeks to simulate Louis's puffy face—he played the Brown Bomber in *The Joe Louis Story*, then reprised the role 27 years later in Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*.

Debuted As a pro golfer at the Victorian Open in Mordialloc, Australia, last Friday, tennis player Scott Draper. The Aussie missed the cut, but the week wasn't a total loss—on Sunday he and Samantha Stosur took the Australian Open mixed-doubles title. Draper planned to suspend his tennis career to pursue golf, but now he could make Australia's Davis Cup team.

Punk'd By an unidentified Maryland fan, Duke's Cameron Crazies, who unknowingly mocked their team during a Jan. 26 home loss. Before the game Duke fans were told Maryland forward Nik Caner-Medley's girlfriend is named Myra and her pet name for him is Piggy. It was a hoax: When fans chanted, "Myra and Piggy," it sounded like they were saying "Myron Piggie"—the notorious summer-league coach who, it was revealed in 2001, had given money to former Duke star Corey Maggette.

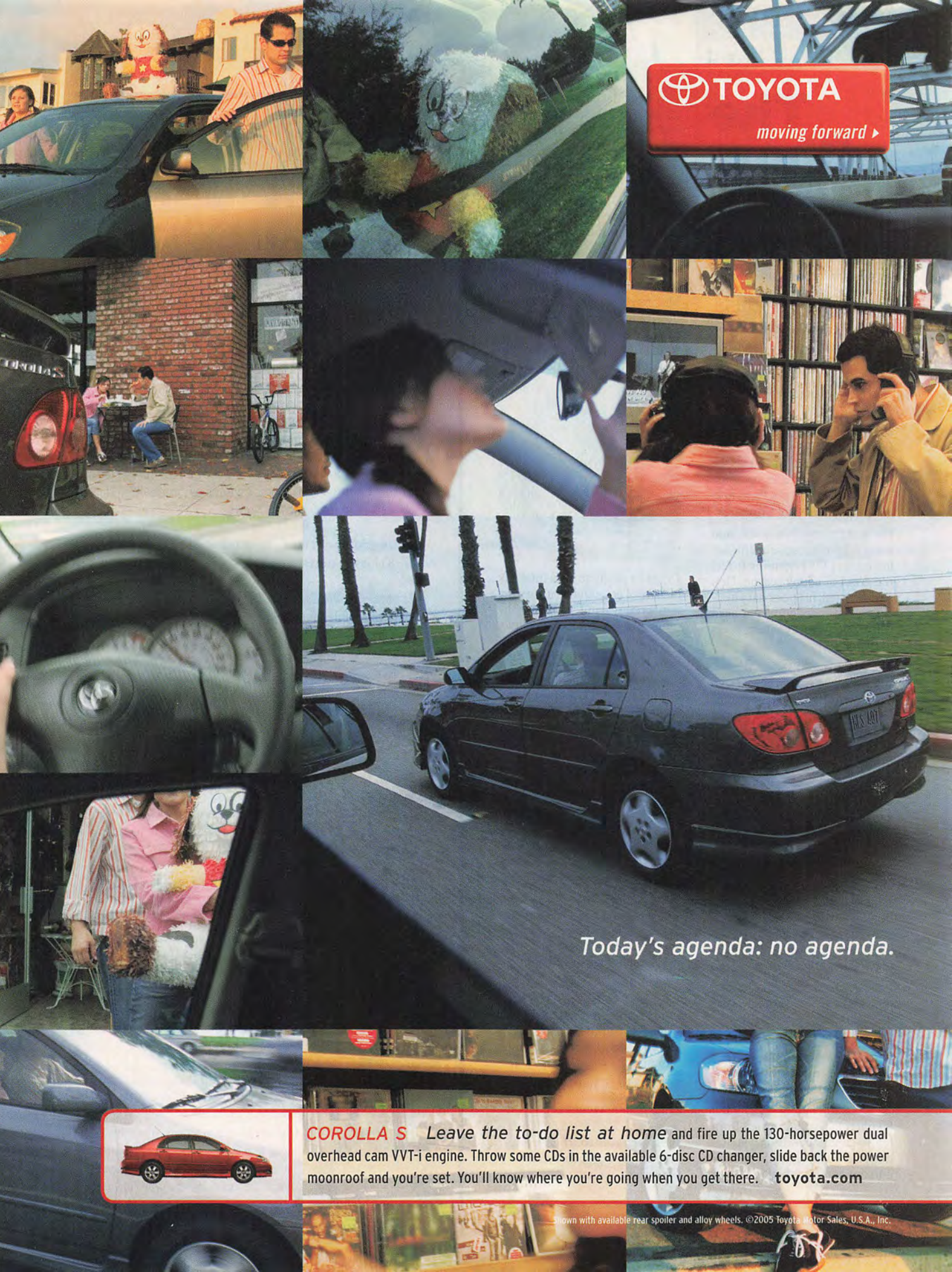
CHANGEUP The crafty Tewksbury (above, in 1993) will now advise farmhands.

Idiots' Savant

Armed with a psych degree, a former hurler becomes the Red Sox' shrink

EIGHTY-SIX years of anguish may finally be over, but the Red Sox still think they need a shrink. The world champions signed former major league pitcher Bob Tewksbury to a one-year contract to serve as the team's sports psychology coach. "The team recognizes there's a big mental component to the performance of baseball players, and that the concept is important but hard to understand," says Tewksbury, 44, who'll give up his gig as a Red Sox TV analyst. In January, Tewksbury, who's been working informally with Boston pitchers for seven years, received a master's degree in sports psychology and counseling from Boston University. The former finesse pitcher, who won 110 games in his 13-year career, will counsel players on Boston's six minor league teams throughout the season. This spring every minor leaguer in the organization will receive a 30-page handbook in which Tewksbury advises players on subjects like reacting to bad calls and pregame visualization exercises. "In baseball there's so much downtime," he says, "so much time to have so many things go through your mind, that the mental component becomes so important." —*Albert Chen*

JEFF CROW/ICON SMI (DRAPER); DAVID E. KLUTHO (TEWKSBURY PITCHING); EDWARD DOUGHERTY/WIREIMAGE.COM (TEWKSBURY); SIMON BRUTY (LEWIS)



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The Show

By Bill Scheft

GOOD TO BE HERE. I've been better. Last week I was disqualified from the Bob Hope for signing an incorrect cue card.

For the first time since 1987 nobody gets to say "I'm going to Disneyworld" Although Disney is still considering airing an ad in which the Super Bowl MVP yells, "I'm going to sue Michael Ovitz!"

Anheuser-Busch decided not to air a commercial during the Super Bowl that fabricates an explanation for Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction last year. Pretty clever. They were able to pin the whole thing on the flatulent Clydesdale.

No rest for the bye week, and weary Patriots coach Bill Belichick is really beginning to feel the grind of a long season. He's so exhausted, his personal physician recommended he cut back to five minutes of evasive answers to the press.

The Eagles signed TE Jeff Thomason, who has spent the last two years working construction in New Jersey. It's already paying dividends. Yesterday he threatened to load Terrell Owens's orthopedist into a cement mixer if he didn't change his prognosis.

Owens plans to suit up for the game. He claims he has healed "spiritually." What does that mean? His ankle can sustain 200 pounds of temptation?

On a recent radio show Rush Limbaugh said, "There's no question Donovan McNabb has improved, and I'm happy to see it." I guess his maid is now scoring black-market Prozac.

Prozac is made by Eli Lilly, who didn't have nearly as good a year as his brother, Peyton Lilly.

Nine people involved in brawl at Auburn Hills meet in district court for pretrial conference And this was smart. Beer sales were cut off after the third motion.

Stephen Jackson returned from his 30-game suspension. He says he's learned his lesson: Never go into the stands without a lawyer.

Last week the Celtics had a Walter McCarty bobblehead giveaway. Unfortunately, the head only bobbles for 6–7 minutes after the game is out of reach.

Since the beginning of the New Year, the Bulls have the best record in the NBA. Did somebody say "The Gordon Rules"?

Delgado Jay-walks to Florida The All-Star first baseman's four-year, $52 million deal with the Marlins became final after he was medically cleared. Tough physical. The first test they ran was seeing if he could stand while the doctor sang *God Bless America*.

Delgado plans to continue his practice of not standing if the song is played during the seventh-inning stretch. Unless, of course, he's in line at the concession stand.

Serena back with a Slam at Australian Open Williams defeated Lindsey Davenport in the women's final despite losing the first set after a rib injury. I don't know if it popped out or was just trying to escape that outfit.

Lleyton Hewitt almost became the first Australian man to win his country's Open since 1976. He upset Andy Roddick in the semis after Roddick got distracted by a heckler's singing. Who knew Mandy Moore could be so vindictive?

Islanders G.M. Mike Milbury has been calling fans to apologize for the lockout And then he tries to sell them high-speed online.

Angela Ruggiero first woman to play in CHL game The two-time Olympian graduated from Harvard last June and fulfilled a lifetime goal: Piss off Lawrence Summers.

My time is up. You've been great. Enjoy MFSB.

Bill Scheft is in court with Fox over his boxing reality show, Growing Up Gatti.

Q+A

Ron Jaworski

The 53-year-old ESPN football analyst was the starting quarterback for the Eagles in Super Bowl XV

SI: What will the night before the Super Bowl be like for Donovan McNabb?

Jaworski: He'll be very relaxed. I was with him before the championship game, and he was clearly comfortable with his game, himself and his team, whereas I didn't see that in the two previous NFC championship games. He has matured to the point where his football intelligence meets his football talents.

SI: Do you have good memories of Super Bowl XV, a 27–10 loss to the Raiders?

Jaworski: There's no question being in the Super Bowl is an incredible feeling. My memories for the most part are very good. Except for the final score.

SI: How many times have you watched that game film?

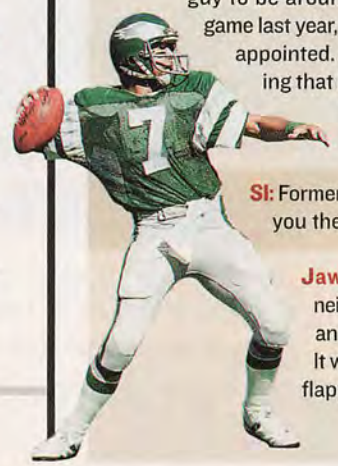
Jaworski: Zero. It's the one game I've never looked at. I once sat down to watch the tape, and as they were introducing the starting lineups, I turned it off.

SI: Can the Eagles beat the Patriots on Sunday?

Jaworski: Absolutely. I think their defense will keep them in the game. I'll be honest: I'm a little biased in my pick. I've got the Eagles winning 16–13.

SI: You are the president of the AFL's Philadelphia Soul, who are co-owned by Jon Bon Jovi. How is he as a boss?

Jaworski: He's passionate about football and a great guy to be around. After we lost our first-ever game last year, to New Orleans, we were all disappointed. I got a call at 5:30 in the morning that Monday from Jon, and he says, "Jaws, how long am I going to feel like this?"



SI: Former Sixers guard Doug Collins gave you the nickname Jaws. Why?

Jaworski: He was my next-door neighbor. He gave me the nickname, and it wasn't because of the movie. It was because my lips were always flapping. —*Richard Deitsch*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN HENDRIX; BILL MCCAY/WIREIMAGE.COM (JAWORSKI); ANTHONY NESTE (JAWORSKI THROWING)

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The Beat

By Lisa Altobelli

MIKE PIAZZA is gay, and he doesn't care who knows it. No, not the Mets' catcher—he married former *Baywatch* babe and Playmate **Alicia Rickter** *(left)* in Florida last Saturday. But the 11-time All-Star's nuptials prompted the **Reverend Mike Piazza**, the leader of the Dallas-based nondenominational Cathedral of Hope, the world's largest gay and lesbian church, to speak out in favor of same-sex marriages. "I want to congratulate the New York–based Mike Piazza on his marriage to his model girlfriend," Rev. Piazza *(inset)* said in a statement. "But I also want to ask why a baseball player can get married in this country but a [gay] preacher can't." The ballplayer looked dashing at his wedding, wearing a charcoal suit and a silver tie. After the ceremony at St. Jude's Catholic Church, the 120 guests, including Tigers catcher **Ivan Rodriguez** (but no current Mets teammates), enjoyed a reception at the Vanderbilt Mansion on Fisher Island off the coast of Miami.

PICTURE THIS Good news for those who think kids aren't active enough. Last week a Brazilian youth soccer club revealed that several pro teams (one is Manchester United) are scouting Jean Carlos Chera *(left)*, a nine-year-old wunderkind. Jean Carlos weighs 77 pounds—an easy bench press for child bodybuilder Richard Sandrak *(right)*. Audiences will meet the 12-year-old in the upcoming documentary *The World's Strongest Boy*.

■ Piazza wasn't the only athlete to get hitched last week. **Arnold Palmer** married **Kathleen Gawthrop** on Wednesday on Oahu's North Shore. "I feel like a 25-year old," said the 75-year-old Palmer. The couple, who dated for three years, have five children and 12 grandchildren between them. (Palmer lost his wife of 45 years, **Winnie**, to cancer in 1999.) Arnie was in Hawaii for the Champions Tour's Turtle Bay Championship, which started last Friday. He struggled, but the four-time Masters champ was still buoyant after finishing the first round in last place, at 10 over par. "Even shooting an 82 doesn't bother me a darn bit," said Palmer.

■ You'd think the NBA would be doing all it could to keep **Steve Nash**'s hairdo out of sight, but the league has forbidden players from wearing hats during interviews. "As we evaluated how we as a league presented ourselves to the media, absolutely one of the things that sets us apart is that fans can see the faces and expressions of our players," said NBA VP **Stu Jackson**. Kings guard **Cuttino Mobley** received a warning last week when he wore a skullcap during an interview. His defense? "It was a bad hair day," said Mobley. . . . Yet another tough postseason loss had **Peyton Manning** wishing he were someone else. The Colts' QB spent last week lying low with his wife, **Ashley**, in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, where, according to the *New York Post*, he told the wait staff, "This week I am known as **Javier Lopez**."

They Said It

MARIA SHARAPOVA

Russian tennis star—and woman of a certain age

- **ON HER LOSS IN THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN:** "There's nothing negative: **I'm 17** years old and I've made it to the semifinals."—*Jan. 27, 2005*
- **ON WINNING WIMBLEDON LAST SUMMER:** "**I'm only 17** and didn't expect to be able to play two weeks in a row at the same level."—*Jan. 16, 2005*
- **ON HANDLING EXPECTATIONS IN 2005:** "I don't think that people really understand that **I am only 17**."—*Jan. 15, 2005*
- **ON HER PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:** "**I'm only 17**, so I'm trying to get better even [at] the things I'm good at."—*Dec. 18, 2004*
- **ON HER GAME:** "There's a lot of things I have to work on. **I'm only 17** and I have a lot of years ahead of me."—*Sept. 25, 2004*
- **ON A LOSS TO RIVAL ANASTASIA MYSKINA:** "**I'm only 17.** When I get to her age, I'll be a lot more experienced player."—*July 30, 2004*
- **ON HER NERVES ON THE EVE OF THE 2004 WIMBLEDON FINAL:** "**I'm only 17**, so how can I be nervous?"—*July 5, 2004*
- **ON WHETHER SHE'D LIKE TO ACT, LIKE SERENA WILLIAMS:** "I'm very young—**I'm only 17**—and right now I just want to be a professional tennis player."—*May 10, 2004*

THIS WEEK'S SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

An Oklahoma state senator wants to legalize a form of cockfighting in which the birds wear tiny boxing gloves.

ASSOCIACAO DESPORTIVA/AP (JEAN CARLOS); NEAL PRESTON (RICHARD); DAVID CALLOW (SHARAPOVA); COREY SIPKIN/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (PIAZZA AND RICKTER); © JOHN KLAUNIG PHOTOGRAPHY (REV. PIAZZA)

The Week Ahead

What to watch and watch for **By Amanda Cherrin**

FRIDAY 4

National Toboggan Championships | More than 250 teams compete in Camden, Maine. ***The Greatest Commercials: Super Bowl vs. The World*** **CBS 8 p.m.** | Viewers judge this competition between classic Super Bowl ads and spots from foreign lands.

SATURDAY 5

Millrose Games NBC 2 p.m. | Veteran pole vaulter Stacey Dragila takes on Mary Saxer, first high school girl to clear 14 feet. **European PGA, Heineken Classic Golf Channel 11:30 p.m.** | Ernie Els goes for a fourth straight title at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

SUNDAY 6

Super Bowl XXXIX, Patriots vs. Eagles Fox 6 p.m. | After the Pats try to win their third title in four years, Fox airs a *Simpsons* episode with Tom Brady, Warren Sapp, LeBron James, Yao Ming and Michelle Kwan enlisting Homer to help them with their victory dances.

MONDAY 7

The Beanpot, No. 1 Boston College vs. No. 14 Boston University NESN 8 p.m. | Who's the Hub's top hockey club? The defending champs face the Terriers in the first round of the 53-year-old competition, which also includes Harvard and Northeastern.

TUESDAY 8

Women's Gymnastics, No. 5 Florida at No. 6 Georgia ESPN2 2:30 p.m. | The Gym Dogs have won 20 straight dual meets against SEC opponents. **Bulls at Mavericks FSN 8:30 p.m.** | Chicago just wrapped up its first winning January since the end of the Jordan era.

WEDNESDAY 9

No. 3 North Carolina at No. 2 Duke ESPN 9 p.m. | The Tar Heels, led by Rashad McCants, have the nation's top offense (91.7 points per game), while the Blue Devils have the ACC's stingiest defense (61.0 points allowed)—and its craziest fans.

THURSDAY 10

NHRA Winternationals | Driver of the Year Greg Anderson, the second drag racer to receive the honor, takes the track in Pomona, Calif. ***Late Show with David Letterman*** **CBS 11:35 p.m.** | Billy Crystal discusses his sportsy Broadway smash, *700 Sundays*.

CHUCK SOLOMON (TOBOGGAN); FOX (SIMPSONS); JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES (GYMNAST); BOB HESSER/RACERS EDGE PHOTOGRAPHY/AP (CAR); BOB ROSATO (DUKE FANS); COURTESY OF FLEETCENTER (BEANPOT LOGO); RICK RICKMAN (DRAGILA)

Under Review

In *Pure Virginia Tech* (Feb. 6 at 8 p.m., CSTV) the Hokies' Brooklyn-bred basketball coach, Seth Greenberg, stops off at a Blacksburg, Va., grocery store to pick up breakfast: a Diet Coke and a bagel. After one bite he suggests that he should open up a bagel shop in town, adding, "If we don't score for the first six minutes, I'll have an opportunity." *Pure*—which follows the fortysomething Greenberg as he prepares Tech, never a basketball power, for the school's first ACC game, against North Carolina—succeeds largely because of the coach's wit. We see him running practice, dealing with the media (and gently mocking the Hokies' play-by-play man), hosting a team dinner at his house and glad-handing fans at a party. Except for a few shots of film sessions, *Pure* is light on X's and O's. Instead it focuses on Greenberg's attempts to mentally prepare his young, overmatched, undermanned squad, to convince them that they can survive in the country's top basketball conference. (In one huddle Greenberg reminds his players not to be intimidated by the Tar Heels by telling them, "F--- the ACC.") Not that Greenberg believes his kids aren't in over their heads. As he leaves his house to go to the game, he gets a hug from his young daughter, whose final words to him are "You got your rabbit foot?" —M.B.

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BORDERS.

Faces in the Crowd

Justin Laury

MARIETTA, GA. > Gymnastics

Laury, a junior at Michigan, set a school record in the all-around and had a career-best score on the vault, leading the Wolverines to a win over Oklahoma. He earned his second straight Big Ten gymnast of the week honors and is the No. 1–ranked all-around gymnast in the country.

Caitlin Malcolm

WINDSOR LOCKS, CONN. > Basketball

Malcolm, a sophomore forward at Brandeis, averaged 26.3 points and 9.7 rebounds over three games for the 15–2 Judges; in one winning effort she had a career-best 29 points and 13 rebounds. She earned her second consecutive Eastern College Athletic Conference player of the week award.

Mary Saxer

LANCASTER, N.Y. > Track and Field

Mary, a senior pole vaulter at Lancaster High, broke her national record for the third time this year when, at the Dartmouth Relays, she became the first U.S. high school girl to clear 14 feet indoors. The win earned her an invitation to the Millrose Games.

J.D. Byers

WESTMINSTER, MD. > Basketball

Byers, a senior guard at Lebanon Valley, hit the game-winning shot in a 75–73 overtime victory over New Jersey City in the final of the Rinso Marquette Invitational. He was named the tournament MVP, and he is a finalist for the Bob Cousy Collegiate Point Guard of the Year Award.

Pat Doherty

WAKEFIELD, MASS. > Hockey

Doherty, a senior forward at Southern New Hampshire, scored his third hat trick of the season while helping the 12-4-2 Penmen to a 6–4 victory over Salve Regina on Jan. 8. He leads the Northeast-10 Conference with 18 goals and is second in points with 28.

Amanda Blumenherst

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ. > Golf

Amanda, a senior at Xavier College Preparatory, shot a five-under-par 67 for a two-day total of 137 at the Aguila Golf Course to win her second straight Arizona Class 5A golf title. Her victory helped the Gators achieve the state's lowest girls' team score ever and win their 23rd title.

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to **SI.com/faces.**

FROM TOP: D.C. GOINGS; ADAM HUNGER; SHARON CANTILLON; BILL JOHNSON; JOHN CLAYTON; JASON WISE

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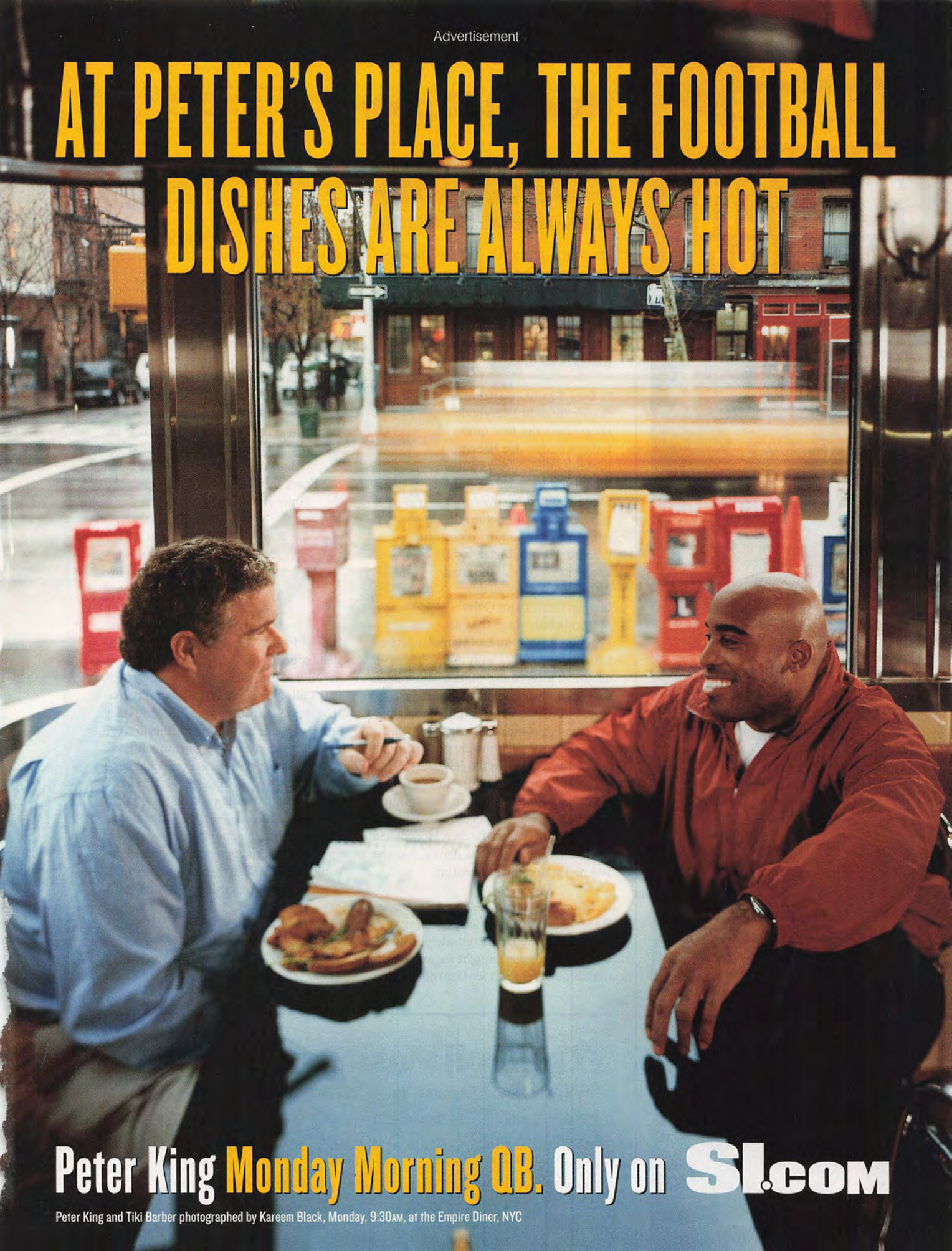

Peter King Monday Morning QB. Only on SI.com

Peter King and Tiki Barber photographed by Kareem Black, Monday, 9:30AM, at the Empire Diner, NYC

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT
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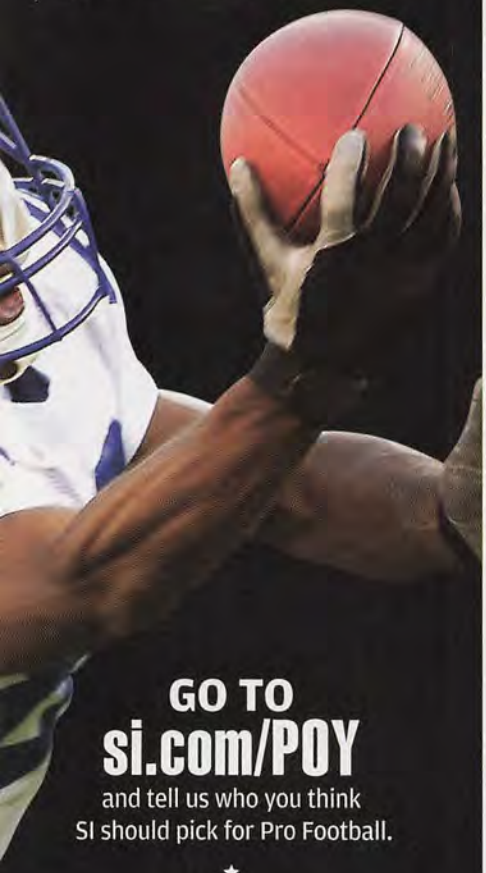

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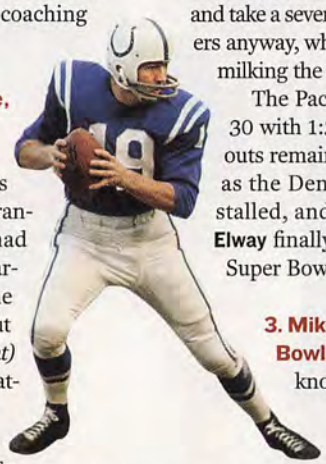
Don Banks's Top Super Bowl Blunders

NEW ENGLAND'S **Bill Belichick** and Philadelphia's **Andy Reid** are two of the premier head coaches in the NFL. But even geniuses can make mistakes on the game's grandest stage. Here now, the most dubious Super Bowl coaching moves of all time.

1. Don Shula, Baltimore, Super Bowl III Everybody remembers the Jets' quarterback story—**Joe Namath**'s backing up his victory guarantee with a 16–7 win. But had Shula handled his own quarterback situation better, the game might have turned out differently. **Johnny Unitas** *(right)* is considered one of the greatest quarterbacks of all time, but he wasn't the Colts' starter. Shula gave that assignment to veteran **Earl Morrall**, who had rather improbably won the NFL's MVP award after replacing Unitas, who missed most of the season with an injured elbow. But Morrall was awful in the biggest game of his career, completing just six of 17 passes for 71 yards and throwing three first-half interceptions against the Jets.

Shula didn't put in his Hall of Famer until there were fewer than four minutes remaining in the third quarter and the Jets had built a 13–0 lead. By then Morrall had led seven scoreless Colts drives, and the Jets had seized the momentum.



2. Mike Holmgren, Green Bay, Super Bowl XXXII Is it ever wise to allow your opponent to score the go-ahead touchdown? Holmgren thought so, and he ordered his defense to let Denver running back **Terrell Davis** waltz in from the one-yard line with 1:45 remaining, giving the Broncos their margin of victory in a 31–24 upset of the Packers.

The debate over the strategy only intensified when it was revealed that Holmgren mistakenly believed the play came on first down, rather than second-and-goal. But the coach's thinking was obvious: With a good chance that Denver would get that final yard and take a seven-point lead over his Packers anyway, why not prevent them from milking the clock in the process?

The Packers got the ball at their 30 with 1:39 to play and two timeouts remaining. They made it as far as the Denver 31 before the drive stalled, and the Broncos and **John Elway** finally had their long-awaited Super Bowl title.

3. Mike Ditka, Chicago, Super Bowl XX It's still painful to acknowledge: **William (the Refrigerator) Perry** scored a Super Bowl rushing touchdown, but future Hall of Famer **Walter Payton** did not. Instead of giving the ball to the man who was the NFL's alltime leading rusher at the time, Ditka allowed Perry, a 318-pound defensive tackle and sometime blocking back best known for his cute nickname, to score on a third-quarter one-yard touchdown run, his only carry of the game. In that same 46–10 rout of New England, Bears fullback **Matt Suhey** had an 11-yard rushing touchdown, and Chicago quarterback **Jim McMahon** punched in a couple of TDs, scoring on runs of two and one yards. Payton, meanwhile, never sniffed the end zone and finished with just 61 yards on 22 carries.

For the rest of Don Banks's top five Super Bowl gaffes, plus coverage of Super Bowl XXXIX, go to SI.com/nfl.

The Poll Position

Whom should SI name as its NFL player of the year?

○ Tom Brady ○ Daunte Culpepper ○ Peyton Manning
○ Curtis Martin ○ Donovan McNabb ○ Terrell Owens

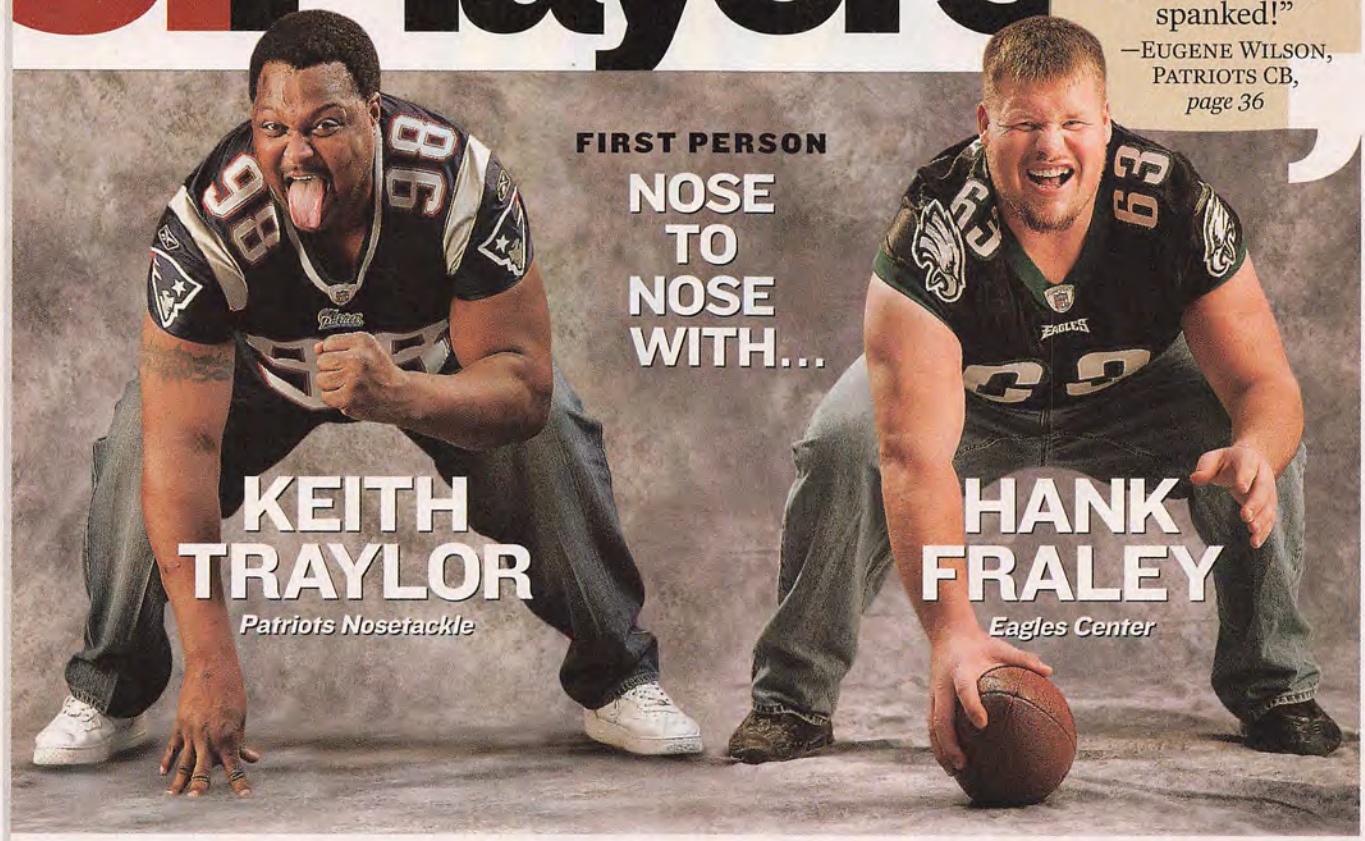
Vote at **SI.com/nfl**. SI *will name its NFL player of the year next week.*

WALTER IOOSS JR. (UNITAS)

Edited by
KOSTYA KENNEDY
AND B.J. SCHECTER

SI Players

"Man, I'm getting spanked!"
—EUGENE WILSON, PATRIOTS CB,
page 36



FIRST PERSON

NOSE TO NOSE WITH...

KEITH TRAYLOR
Patriots Nosetackle

HANK FRALEY
Eagles Center

ON SIGNING WITH NEW ENGLAND AS A FREE AGENT LAST SPRING I told my agent, 'I don't want to play nowhere cold unless it's a Super Bowl team.' And damn, the first day the Patriots called and had me in.

ON WHAT MAKES THE PATS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER FOUR TEAMS HE HAS PLAYED ON They bring in players who do what the coaches want them to do. You do it, or you're not here. Nobody fusses about their roles. Everybody's content doing what the team thinks give us the best chance to win.

ON HIS ROLLER-COASTER SEASON In September, I endured a tragedy. My younger brother, Mark Traylor, died. He had Behcet's disease, which is like Lou Gehrig's disease. It impacts your nervous system. The last time I saw him, in September, he could only communicate with me by moving his eyes. I missed a week of practice, and the early part of the season was rough. My mind just wasn't on football. I'll never get over my brother dying.

ON MORPHING FROM A 260-POUND LINEBACKER AS A ROOKIE IN 1991 TO A 340-POUND NOSETACKLE When I came in with Denver, I liked the good life. I kept gaining weight. When I was in Kansas City in '94, [coach] Marty Schottenheimer asked me to play D-line. They sent me to the World League [now NFL Europe] that off-season. I really didn't want to be there. But I look back on it, and it was good for me. I needed to learn the basics of line play, and I did.

ON BEING IN TWO SUPER BOWLS WITH DENVER My biggest memory is a fourth-and-one against Green Bay in Super Bowl XXXII. I met Dorsey Levens head-on and stopped him. No gain. Big momentum-changer. I'm a big guy, you know. I got a picture of that stop in my home.

ON INTERIOR LINE PLAY It's a train wreck in there. If you're worried about a body part getting mangled, do not become a guard or center.

ON HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH DONOVAN McNABB A center and quarterback have to be close. On Wednesday and Thursday nights we get together for 45 minutes, an hour, alone, to watch tape. We always eat a good meal while we're watching. Steaks, tacos, chicken. We call it 'dinner and a movie.' What we're looking for is tendencies. When do they blitz? Out of what formation? How do the safeties rotate? Stuff like that.

ON THE PATRIOTS They never beat themselves. They play very hard every snap. And they're incredibly physical: It doesn't matter who's in the way—lineman, receiver, running back—that defense hits 'em as hard as they can.

ON PHILLY CHEESESTEAKS I get the 'Whiz without.' That's a cheesesteak with Cheez Whiz and no onions. In Pittsburgh, where I went to college [Robert Morris], one famous sandwich was the Primanti Brothers' hot Italian. There's sausage, cole slaw, cheese, tomatoes and french fries, all in the sandwich. You don't want to eat those sober.

ON GOING AGAINST KEITH TRAYLOR Good player. Quick first step. Played him once. The thing I remember is when he wants to bring it, he's extremely hard to move. With him my goal is to get a stalemate.

ON SUPER SUNDAY It's a night game. I hate night games. Long, long day. I'll watch cartoons, or whatever, to pass the time.

ON THE PRESSURE OF 120 MILLION PEOPLE WATCHING I wasn't feeling any pressure—until you just said that.

—As told to Peter King

THE 6′ 2″, 340-POUND TRAYLOR, 35, WILL MEET THE 6′ 2″, 300-POUND FRALEY, 27, HEAD-ON IN SUPER BOWL XXXIX

STEPHAN SAVOIA/AP (WILSON)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AL TIELEMANS

INTRODUCING

Real barbecue *taste*
without the lighter *fluid*
or singed *eyebrows.*

Ritz® Chips. Toasted Good.

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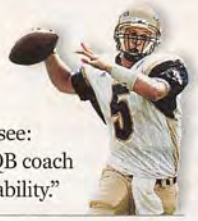
WHO'S Hot

Relative Success

Former Pats DE Julius Adams has reason to root against his old team on Sunday. Son Keith, six when Dad played in Super Bowl XX, is an Eagles LB, making Adams family the fifth to have father-son combo in game. In Oklahoma, Angela Ruggiero *(above)* became first woman nongoalie to play men's pro hockey, as defenseman for CHL's Tulsa Oilers—while brother Bill tended net.

Charlie Frye



Akron QB had super week of NFL auditions leading to Senior Bowl—scouts compared him with Brett Favre—then won game's MVP to zip up wish lists of teams looking for next MAC star (see: Byron Leftwich, Ben Roethlisberger). Raiders QB coach Steve Sarkisian: "He really showed a big-time ability."

Being Green

Hue of the moment. Eagles are in the Super Bowl, Celtics sit atop Atlantic Division, and neon threads put Aussie Open winner Serena Williams *(page 62)* in the limelight. It's even hotter being Green Day: Band is up for six Grammys on Feb. 13.

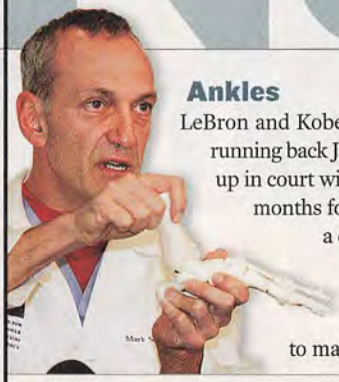
Maryland

Check out those Terps! Upsets of No. 2 Blue Devils *at* Duke and No. 22 Georgia Tech had fans dancing to a Nik Caner-Medley *(left)* as team climbed into Top 25. And good news at Inner Harbor: the O's landed Sammy Sosa, who may soon club homer number 600 out of slugger-friendly Camden Yards.

Arena Football

League opened 19th season with solid TV deal and high-profile owners Jon Bon Jovi (Philadelphia), John Elway (Colorado) and Mike Ditka (Chicago). Teams averaged 47 points first week; three games were decided by three or less.

WHO'S Not



Ankles

LeBron and Kobe are nursing sprains, and Ravens running back Jamal Lewis, just off surgery, showed up in court with right ankle in cast, then got four months for using a cellphone to try to set up a drug deal. And the incessant talk of TO's injury—the "will he or won't he be ready for big one" debate began *before Christmas*—is enough to make you cry "ankle!"

Rick Majerus

After accepting, then abruptly backing out of, job as USC basketball coach in December, big fella was back as ESPN analyst and freelance lech. During Tennessee-Kentucky game he said he hoped to see Wildcats fan Ashley Judd in stands so he didn't "have to watch adult videos back at the hotel." Classy.

Bernie Bickerstaff

Bobcats coach tells players to stop complaining to refs, vowing to quit own whining as well. Next night he gets ejected from game versus Sixers for . . . arguing with ref. Said Bickerstaff, "That's great leadership, huh?"

Connecticut

UConn men's hoop team trekked to South Bend and lost to unranked Notre Dame. Hours later, Irish struck again, the women's team giving Huskies first Big East home loss since 1993. State's egghead hoopsters are faring even worse: Yale men's and women's team's are 7–25 combined.

Fussball

As Germany prepares to host World Cup, its Bundesliga was rocked by scandal: Ref Robert Hoyzer admitted taking more than $65,000 to fix matches. (He once sent off a Hamburg striker for "insulting behavior.") Worse news ahead? Said Hoyzer, "Players, too, received payments."

SI PLAYERS POLL

Based on a survey of 227 NBA players

For complete results and breakdown of the poll go to SI.com/scorecard.

Which opponent do you most fear when he has the ball and a chance to win the game?

Kobe Bryant *Lakers guard*	**56%**
Allen Iverson *Sixers guard*	13%
Reggie Miller *Pacers guard*	9%
Tracy McGrady *Rockets guard*	7%

FAST FACTS: San Antonio Spurs forward Tim Duncan (fifth, 2%) was the only other player to get more than 1%. . . . Ten of the 14 players who received multiple votes are guards. . . . Bryant leads all NBA players with an average of 8.6 fourth-quarter points this season. . . . Miller, 39, received 27% of the vote from respondents who were 35 and older.

TOM BRIGLIA/WIREIMAGE.COM (ADAMS); RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES (RUGGIERO); CHRIS GARDNER/AP (MAN W/ ANKLE); JON SOOHOO/WIREIMAGE.COM (MAJERUS); CHUCK BURTON/AP (BICKERSTAFF); KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/AP (JACK NICHOLSON); KEVIN COX/WIREIMAGE.COM (CANER-MEDLEY); DILIP VISHWANAT/SPORTING NEWS/ICON SMI (FRYE)

SUPER BOWL HYPE

Milking It

Two Super Bowl–bound stars earn their stripes

YOU KNOW you're the cream of the NFL crop when the milk guys come calling. Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb *(top, right)* and Patriots linebacker Tedy Bruschi *(above)* were invited to endorse the beverage last week, joining a list of lactose-tolerant athletes that includes players from the last seven Super Bowls, as well as more than 200 celebrities such as Angelina Jolie and Hilary Duff. "I've done more than 150 of these, and I swear I don't know who half the people are," says Norman Stewart, a 37-year-old L.A. food stylist who has been painting the mustache for five years. Stewart concocted the 'stache recipe—a strange brew that includes cream cheese, sour cream, vanilla ice cream and secret ingredients Stewart refuses to divulge. "The trick was to make it the right density and have it taste good," says Stewart. "I pour it in a glass, and they tip it until it goes about three quarters of the way from their upper lip to the nose. After a dab with a tissue [and a little brushwork] it lasts for two rolls of film." The Super Bowl print ads were shot separately in Massachusetts and New Jersey by longtime SI photographer Walter Iooss *(top left, inset)*, who directed Bruschi to get more animated. ("I would pick a nice, cold glass of milk over a brewski any day," said the linebacker and father of two.) McNabb, who grimaced at the taste of Stewart's concoction, was delighted to be joining the ranks of milk men that include QBs Tom Brady and Brett Favre and spoke of his childhood craving for calcium: "I look back in time where I sat back and drank milk to give me that extra edge. . . . [Drinking milk] has put me in a position to fulfill a dream." The shoots took 1½ hours each. "Bruschi was just a dear," said Stewart. But the 'stache man's favorite endorser was Muhammad Ali, who suffers from the effects of Parkinson's disease. "It was tough to get [the mustache] on because he was bouncing up and down a bit," said Stewart. "But he had great strength, and you could see the toughness in his eyes. It was an honor to apply that mustache." —*Lisa Altobelli*

DIANA ELIAZOV (MILK PHOTOS); CORBIS (TY); PETER BROUILLET/WIREIMAGE.COM (WILSON); DREW HALLOWELL/ICON SMI (MCDOUGLE)

SUPER VIDEO MATCHUP

Eagles DE Jerome McDougle and Patriots CB Eugene Wilson couldn't wait for Super Bowl XXXIX, so they played EA Sports Madden 2005 *on XBox Live.*

CLAD IN a powder-blue Carmelo Anthony Nuggets jersey, McDougle arrived at Philadelphia's Airport Marriott saying he had brought his wife, Jaceinte, and their baby, Jerome III, for "moral support." On the first play from scrimmage he showed how dangerous a healthy Terrell Owens could be, hitting TO with an 80-yard TD pass. "That was a technical difficulty!" groaned Wilson, who had fumbled with the controls. (Wilson, wearing a blue sweatshirt, had support, in his Foxborough hotel room, from his wife, Jamie.) McDougle kept up the pressure, using Eagles DE Jevon (the Freak) Kearse to wreak havoc on defense—following one of Kearse's three sacks McDougle yelled, "Freakaleak!" After McNabb's 19-yard touchdown pass to Todd Pinkston gave Philly a 21–3 halftime lead, Wilson said to Jamie, "Man, I'm getting spanked." She replied, "So spank him back!"

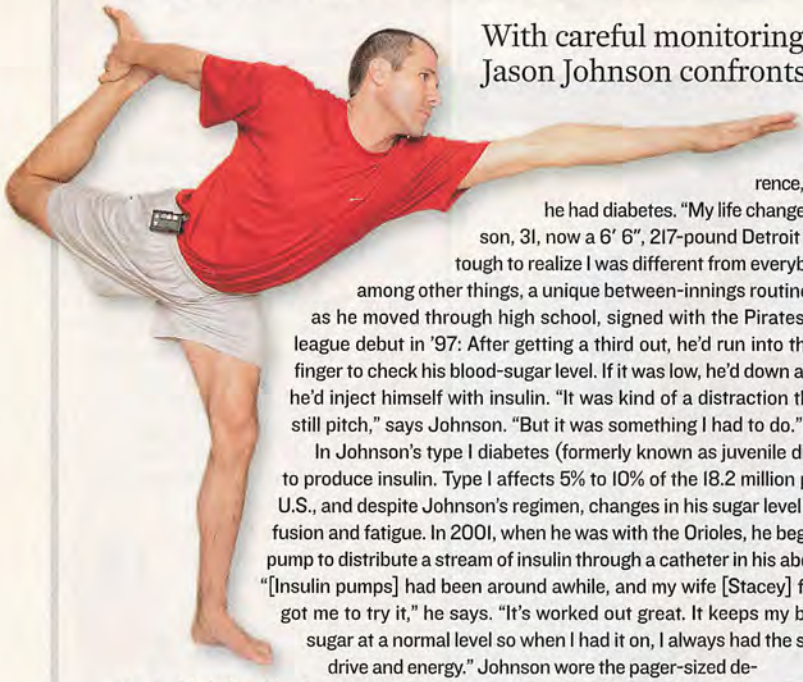
Wilson, who had subbed in Deion Branch as his No. 1 receiver ahead of Troy Brown, heeded his wife's advice in the second half with a no-huddle passing attack. (He didn't run the ball all game.) After Tom Brady's five-yard TD pass to Bethel Johnson, Wilson high-fived Jamie and said to McDougle, "You like that right there?" A 47-yard scoring pass from Brady to Johnson with 2:56 left cut the lead to 21–17. But after a failed onside kick McDougle began to eat up the clock on the ground, chanting, *"Na-Na-Na-Na, hey-hey-hey, goodbye."* ("We've got a singer over there," deadpanned Wilson.) McDougle then sealed the win with a 10-yard TD pass to TO. Said a grumpy Wilson, "See you in Jacksonville." **EAGLES 28, PATRIOTS 17**

EUGENE WILSON, *PATRIOTS CB* >>

<< JEROME McDOUGLE, *EAGLES DE*

• MY BODY

Sweet Success



With careful monitoring, the Tigers' Jason Johnson confronts his diabetes

WHEN HE was an 11-year-old baseball star in Florence, Ky., Jason Johnson learned he had diabetes. "My life changed dramatically," says Johnson, 31, now a 6' 6", 217-pound Detroit Tigers righthander. "It was tough to realize I was different from everybody else." Different meant, among other things, a unique between-innings routine that Johnson maintained as he moved through high school, signed with the Pirates in 1992 and made his big league debut in '97: After getting a third out, he'd run into the clubhouse and prick his finger to check his blood-sugar level. If it was low, he'd down a sports drink; if it was high, he'd inject himself with insulin. "It was kind of a distraction that I had to do all that and still pitch," says Johnson. "But it was something I had to do."

In Johnson's type I diabetes (formerly known as juvenile diabetes) the pancreas fails to produce insulin. Type I affects 5% to 10% of the 18.2 million people with diabetes in the U.S., and despite Johnson's regimen, changes in his sugar level can lead to dizziness, confusion and fatigue. In 2001, when he was with the Orioles, he began using a pump to distribute a stream of insulin through a catheter in his abdomen. "[Insulin pumps] had been around awhile, and my wife [Stacey] finally got me to try it," he says. "It's worked out great. It keeps my blood sugar at a normal level so when I had it on, I always had the same drive and energy." Johnson wore the pager-sized device on his belt, taking it off only to shower and for games ("I thought baseball wouldn't let me wear it," he says) until he signed with Detroit before last season. Then, Tigers trainer Kevin Rand formally petitioned the league to approve the pump, and after a trial run in spring training showed the device was not a distraction to hitters, the pump got the O.K. Says Johnson, "Now I can come into the dugout and actually concentrate on how to pitch the next inning."

Johnson has always been an avid runner and weightlifter, in part because he felt he had to do extra to prove himself to coaches. Yet overtraining both in and out of season sometimes sapped his strength as the schedule wore on. (Last year he was 8–8 with a 4.26 ERA through July; then he went 0–7 with a 7.13 in the final two months.) He now does power yoga (he demonstrates the Dancer's Pose, *above*) with Stacey, at a facility near their Tampa home. Johnson also remains on a strict, carb-counting diet—he eats six times a day, supplementing meals with protein shakes and energy bars—which has long been his way of life. As he prepares to report to the Tigers' training complex in Lakeland, Fla., on Feb. 17, Johnson is definitely pumped. —*Amanda Cherrin*

THE BEST JOKE I CAN TELL IN *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*

BY RAJA BELL, *Jazz Guard*

"Guy walks into a store to get a bag of chips, and an old lady comes up, looking sad. She says, 'You remind me exactly of my son, but he's not with us any more. Could you do me a little favor and say, 'Hi, Mama,' to me? It would make me feel so good.' It seems strange, but he does it, and kind of loud because she seems hard of hearing. A couple of minutes later he's in the next aisle, and she walks up again, tears in her eyes. 'I hate to keep bothering you, but it would mean so much to me if you could say, 'I love you, Mama.'" This seems even weirder, but he feels sorry for her, so he says loudly, "I love you, Mama." Then he goes to the back of the store, picks up a bottle of soda and gets in line at the register. The woman is carrying her groceries, and as she leaves, she says, "You've been so nice. Could you do me one last favor and say, 'Bye, Mama'?" So he does, and she walks out of the store, waving to him. He gets up to the counter with his chips and soda, and the clerk rings it up and says, "That'll be $125." He says, "What? For chips and a drink?" And the clerk says, "Your mama said you were buying the groceries."

The Questions *with* Quentin Richardson

Suns Guard

What was your welcome-to-the-NBA moment? Right after the draft [in 2000] I was playing in Alonzo Mourning's charity event, Zo's Summer Groove, and already they had me doing rookie stuff. They had me and Darius Miles blindfolded, and we had to do that stuff they do at halftimes [in NBA arenas], like find a ball. Stephon Marbury was moving it around every time we got close.

Your favorite off-day activity? Chilling with family and watching movies. Sometimes me and my fiancée, Brandy [yes, *the* Brandy], take the baby [her daughter, Sy'rai] to Chuck E. Cheese's.

If I weren't in the NBA, I'd be . . . On the big screen, being funny. I'm silly like that, and I've got a smile made for TV.

If I were commissioner for a day, I'd . . . Cater everything to the players. Some rules are stiff. You can't wear different colored shoes [from your teammates']. You can't wear different colored headbands. We're individuals. Allow us to be individual.

Last Week

Richardson, 24, and Suns won their fifth straight on Sunday to tie Spurs for NBA's best record.

This Week

Suns host Knicks on Saturday. In a 133–118 win on Jan. 25, Richardson drained seven three-pointers.

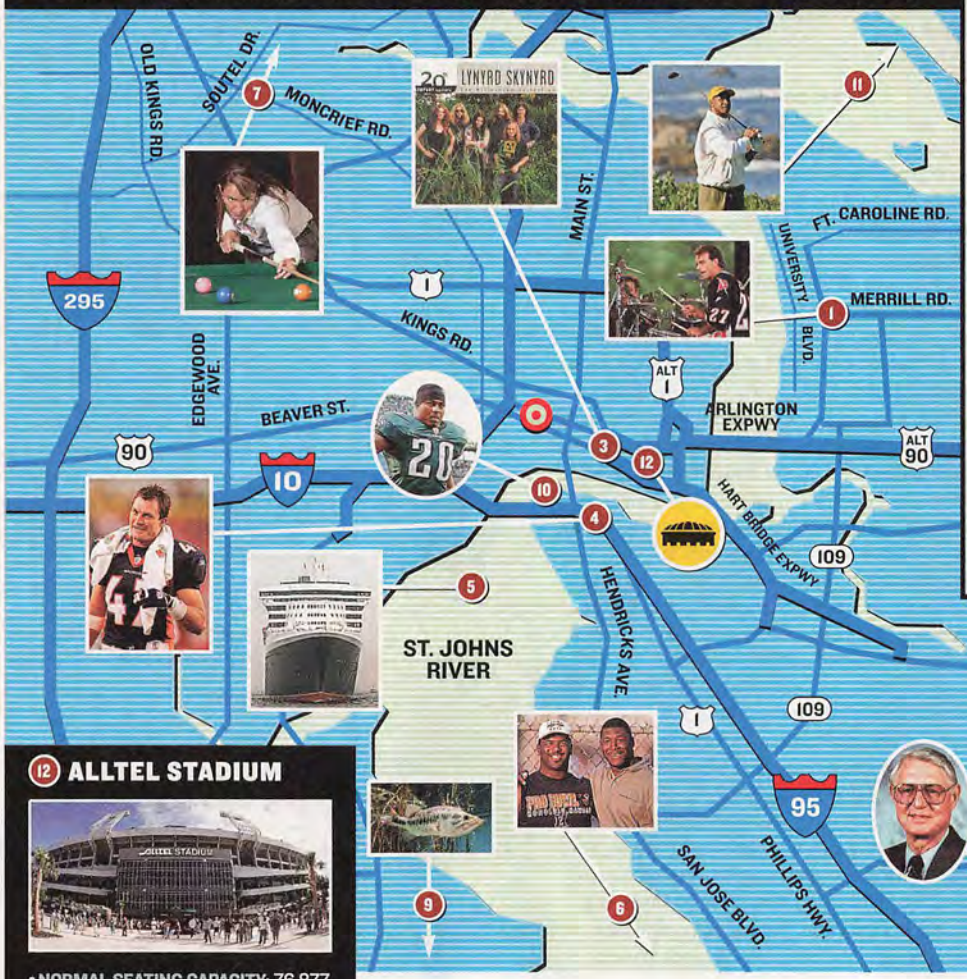
BILL FRAKES (JOHNSON YOGA); JOHN CORDES/ICON SMI (JOHNSON THROWING); BILL FRAKES (INSULIN PUMP); JOHN CORDES/ICON SMI (JOHNSON BENDING); GARY DINEEN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (RICHARDSON SMILING); JOE GIZA/REUTERS (BRANDY); JOHN W. MCDONOUGH (RICHARDSON ACTION); EVERETT COLLECTION (OLD LADY); CHRIS LIVINGSTON/ICON SMI (RAJA BELL)

● NFL ROAD MAP: JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

Gala in Gator Country

Schmooze with Swann, Skynyrd or Staubach: something Super for everyone

FEB. 6 >> NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS VS. PHILADELPHIA EAGLES >> 6:30 P.M. EST



(12) ALLTEL STADIUM

- NORMAL SEATING CAPACITY: 76,877
- SUPER BOWL CAPACITY: 84,000
- PREDICTED GAME TIME TEMP: 62°
- TURF: Mix of Bermuda grass, perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass, all grown in Riddleville, Ga.
- WEIGHT OF THE 2.5 ACRES OF SOD TRUCKED IN FOR GAME: 1,804,000 pounds
- FACE VALUE OF NOSEBLEED SUPER BOWL TICKET: $500
- FACE VALUE OF CHEAPEST TICKET TO FIRST SUPER BOWL: $6

PARTY TIMES

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED SUPER SWIMSUIT PARTY *Seawalk Pavilion* (1st Avenue North and 1st Street North, Jacksonville Beach); Feb. 5, 9 p.m. Expected guests: 2,000. SI swimsuit models Marisa Miller *(below, in blue)*, Bridget Hall and Veronica Varekova mingle with Ben Roethlisberger, Edgerrin James, Byron Leftwich and other NFL stars.

NFL PLAYERS GALA *Plush* (845 University Blvd North) Feb. 6, 9 p.m. Expected guests: 3,000. Among the invited to the $100-a-head event: Alicia Keys *(below)* and NFLers Adewale Ogunleye (Bears) and Patrick Surtain (Dolphins). Five percent of proceeds will go to tsunami relief.

PLAYBOY SUPER SATURDAY NIGHT *River City Brewing Co.* (835 Museum Circle) Feb. 5, 9:30 p.m. Expected guests: 1,500. The place to be if you like body-painted mermaids and Jeremy Shockey. Other invitees to the grotto-themed event: John Elway and Ray Lewis. Hef, of course, will be on hand.

MAXIMONY SUPER BOWL PARTY *Garden Club of Jacksonville* (1005 Riverside Ave); Feb. 5, 9 p.m. Expected guests: 1,200. A wedding theme, complete with hack singers. Jerry Rice, Warren Sapp and Nicole Richie RSVP'd yes.

[1] CELEBRITY FLAG FOOTBALL *(Jacksonville University's Milne Field, Feb. 5)* NFL stars past (Roger Staubach) and present (Bills' Willis McGahee) go deep. Doug Flutie and The Flutie Brothers band provide halftime entertainment. **[2] TASTE OF THE NFL** *(ATP International Headquarters, Feb. 5)* A player or alum from every team offers a sampling of his city's fare. (Texans LB Antwan Peek will bring papaya and mango BBQ tenderloin.) Fans can nosh with players for $400. **[3] LYNYRD SKYNYRD'S SUPER BOWL SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL** *(Veterans Memorial Arena, Feb. 5)* The homegrown Southern rock gods (they formed at Jacksonville High, naming themselves after gym teacher Leonard Skinner) launch their three-guitar attack. Other shows this week include Kanye West and Outkast's Big Boi *(Feb. 3)* and Dwight Yoakam and Jo Dee Messina *(Feb. 4)*. **[4] NFL EXPERIENCE** *(JEA Park, Feb. 3–6)* Boot a field goal, run a pass route and catch a punt from a JUGS machine. On Saturday, NFL players join the competition. **[5] SUPER FLEET** *(St. Johns River)* The city fell short of the NFL-mandated 17,500 "quality rooms," so five cruise ships will dock within eight miles of the stadium. All rooms are sold-out, but their bars, restaurants and amenities are open to the public. **[6] NFL GLOBAL JR. CHAMPIONSHIP** *(Skinner-Barco Stadium, Feb. 2 and 5)* Teams from Canada, France, Japan and Mexico compete against the U.S. 19-and-under squad. **[7] TAMERRY'S BILLIARDS BENEFIT** *(TaMerry's Sports Café, Feb. 4)* Vivian (the Texas Tornado) Villarreal joins NFL vets, including Bengals' Kevin Hardy and Jags' Juran Bolden, in nine ball action. **[8] SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION OF DON WEISS** *(Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach, through Feb. 27)* The personal stash of the late executive director of the NFL includes a Lombardi Trophy, Super Bowl rings and rare player photos. **[9] SUPER CELEBRATION BASS TOURNAMENT** *(Riverfront Park, Feb. 5)* A VIP tournament featuring ex–Seahawks fullback John L. Williams. Also an open boat category with a $10,000 top prize. **[10] EA MADDEN BOWL** *(River City Brewing Company, Feb. 3)* Two-time defending champ Dwight Freeney of the Colts and seven NFL challengers play Madden NFL 2005. **[11] NFL CHARITIES GOLF CLASSIC** *(Amelia Island Plantation, Feb. 5)* Hall of Famers such as Kellen Winslow Sr., Lynn Swann and Jan Stenerud compete in foursomes and tee off in a hole in one contest for a new Cadillac.

—Adam Duerson

MAP BY JOHN HERSEY; CARLA BONNER (VILLARREAL); BOB LEVEY/WIREIMAGE.COM (SNOOP DOGG); MCA (LYNYRD SKYNYRD); DON HEUPEL/AP (FLUTIE); MIKE FIALA/WIREIMAGE/ICON SMI (SWANN); TIM SHAFFER/REUTERS (KEYS); DAVID WESTING/GETTY IMAGES (MILLER); TIM HAWLEY/FOODPIX/GETTY IMAGES (FILET); PAUL SPINELLI/GETTY IMAGES (WEISS); BILL FRAKES (BUTLER); ROBERT HOLLAND/THE IMAGE BANK/GETTY IMAGES (BUTLER); DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES (ALLTEL); INSA KORTH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (SHIP); SCOTT HALLERAN/GETTY IMAGES (LYNCH); HUNTER MARTIN/WIREIMAGE.COM (DAWKINS)

FOOD AND FAMILY.
The 2 sources of cholesterol.

VYTORIN
treats them both.

You probably know that cholesterol comes from food. But what you might not know is that your cholesterol has a lot to do with your family history.

VYTORIN treats both sources of cholesterol. When diet and exercise aren't enough, adding VYTORIN can help.

VYTORIN helps block the absorption of cholesterol that comes from food *and* reduces the cholesterol that your body makes naturally. And VYTORIN can dramatically lower your bad cholesterol 45%–60%. (Average effect depending on dose. 52% at the usual starting dose.)

Ask your doctor about VYTORIN.

Important information: VYTORIN is a prescription tablet and isn't right for everyone, including women who are nursing or pregnant or who may become pregnant, and anyone with liver problems. Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. VYTORIN may interact with other medicines or certain foods, increasing your risk of getting this serious side effect. So, tell your doctor about any other medications you are taking.

To learn more, call
1-877-VYTORIN or visit vytorin.com

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VYTORIN™
(ezetimibe/simvastatin)

Treat the 2 sources of cholesterol.

VYTORIN™ (ezetimibe/simvastatin) Tablets

Patient Information about VYTORIN (VI-tor-in)

Generic name: ezetimibe/simvastatin tablets

Read this information carefully before you start taking VYTORIN. Review this information each time you refill your prescription for VYTORIN as there may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or your treatment. If you have any questions about VYTORIN, ask your doctor. Only your doctor can determine if VYTORIN is right for you.

What is VYTORIN?

VYTORIN is a medicine used to lower levels of total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and fatty substances called triglycerides in the blood. In addition, VYTORIN raises levels of HDL (good) cholesterol. It is used for patients who cannot control their cholesterol levels by diet alone. You should stay on a cholesterol-lowering diet while taking this medicine.

VYTORIN works to reduce your cholesterol in two ways. It reduces the cholesterol absorbed in your digestive tract, as well as the cholesterol your body makes by itself. VYTORIN does not help you lose weight.

Who should not take VYTORIN?

Do not take VYTORIN:

- If you are allergic to ezetimibe or simvastatin, the active ingredients in VYTORIN, or to the inactive ingredients. For a list of inactive ingredients, see the "Inactive ingredients" section at the end of this information sheet.
- If you have active liver disease or repeated blood tests indicating possible liver problems.
- If you are pregnant, or think you may be pregnant, or planning to become pregnant or breast-feeding.

VYTORIN is not recommended for use in children under 10 years of age.

What should I tell my doctor before and while taking VYTORIN?

Tell your doctor right away if you experience unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness. This is because on rare occasions, muscle problems can be serious, including muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of VYTORIN.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems.

Taking VYTORIN with certain substances can increase the risk of muscle problems. It is particularly important to tell your doctor if you are taking any of the following:

- cyclosporine
- danazol
- antifungal agents (such as itraconazole or ketoconazole)
- fibric acid derivatives (such as gemfibrozil, bezafibrate, or fenofibrate)
- the antibiotics erythromycin, clarithromycin, and telithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors (such as indinavir, nelfinavir, ritonavir, and saquinavir)
- the antidepressant nefazodone
- amiodarone (a drug used to treat an irregular heartbeat)
- verapamil (a drug used to treat high blood pressure, chest pain associated with heart disease, or other heart conditions)
- large doses (≥1 g/day) of niacin or nicotinic acid
- large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

It is also important to tell your doctor if you are taking coumarin anticoagulants (drugs that prevent blood clots, such as warfarin).

Tell your doctor about any prescription and nonprescription medicines you are taking or plan to take, including natural or herbal remedies.

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions including allergies.

Tell your doctor if you:

- drink substantial quantities of alcohol or ever had liver problems. VYTORIN may not be right for you.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Do not use VYTORIN if you are pregnant, trying to become pregnant or suspect that you are pregnant. If you become pregnant while taking VYTORIN, stop taking it and contact your doctor immediately.
- are breast-feeding. Do not use VYTORIN if you are breast-feeding.

Tell other doctors prescribing a new medication that you are taking VYTORIN.

How should I take VYTORIN?

- Take VYTORIN once a day, in the evening, with or without food.
- Try to take VYTORIN as prescribed. If you miss a dose, do not take an extra dose. Just resume your usual schedule.
- Continue to follow a cholesterol-lowering diet while taking VYTORIN. Ask your doctor if you need diet information.
- Keep taking VYTORIN unless your doctor tells you to stop. If you stop taking VYTORIN, your cholesterol may rise again.

What should I do in case of an overdose?

Contact your doctor immediately.

What are the possible side effects of VYTORIN?

See your doctor regularly to check your cholesterol level and to check for side effects. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start taking VYTORIN and during treatment.

In clinical studies patients reported the following common side effects while taking VYTORIN: headache and muscle pain (see What should I tell my doctor before and while taking VYTORIN?).

The following side effects have been reported in general use with either ezetimibe or simvastatin tablets (tablets that contain the active ingredients of VYTORIN):

- allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat that may cause difficulty in breathing or swallowing (which may require treatment right away), and rash; alterations in some laboratory blood tests; liver problems; inflammation of the pancreas; nausea; gallstones; inflammation of the gallbladder.

Tell your doctor if you are having these or any other medical problems while on VYTORIN. This is not a complete list of side effects. For a complete list, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

General Information about VYTORIN

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use VYTORIN for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give VYTORIN to other people, even if they have the same condition you have. It may harm them.

This summarizes the most important information about VYTORIN. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for information about VYTORIN that is written for health professionals. For additional information, visit the following web site: vytorin.com.

Inactive ingredients:
Butylated hydroxyanisole NF, citric acid monohydrate USP, croscarmellose sodium NF, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose USP, lactose monohydrate NF, magnesium stearate NF, microcrystalline cellulose NF, and propyl gallate NF.

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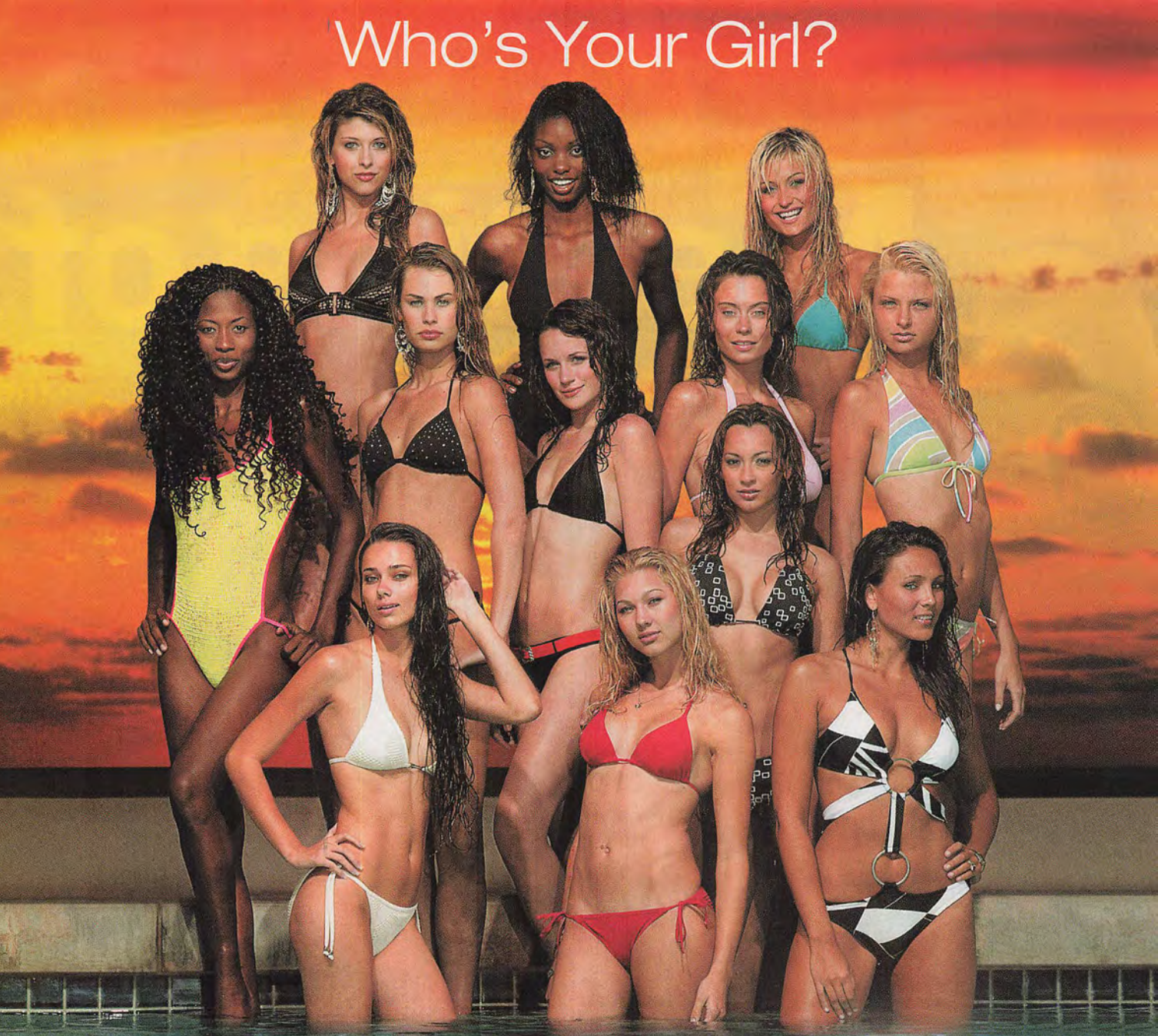

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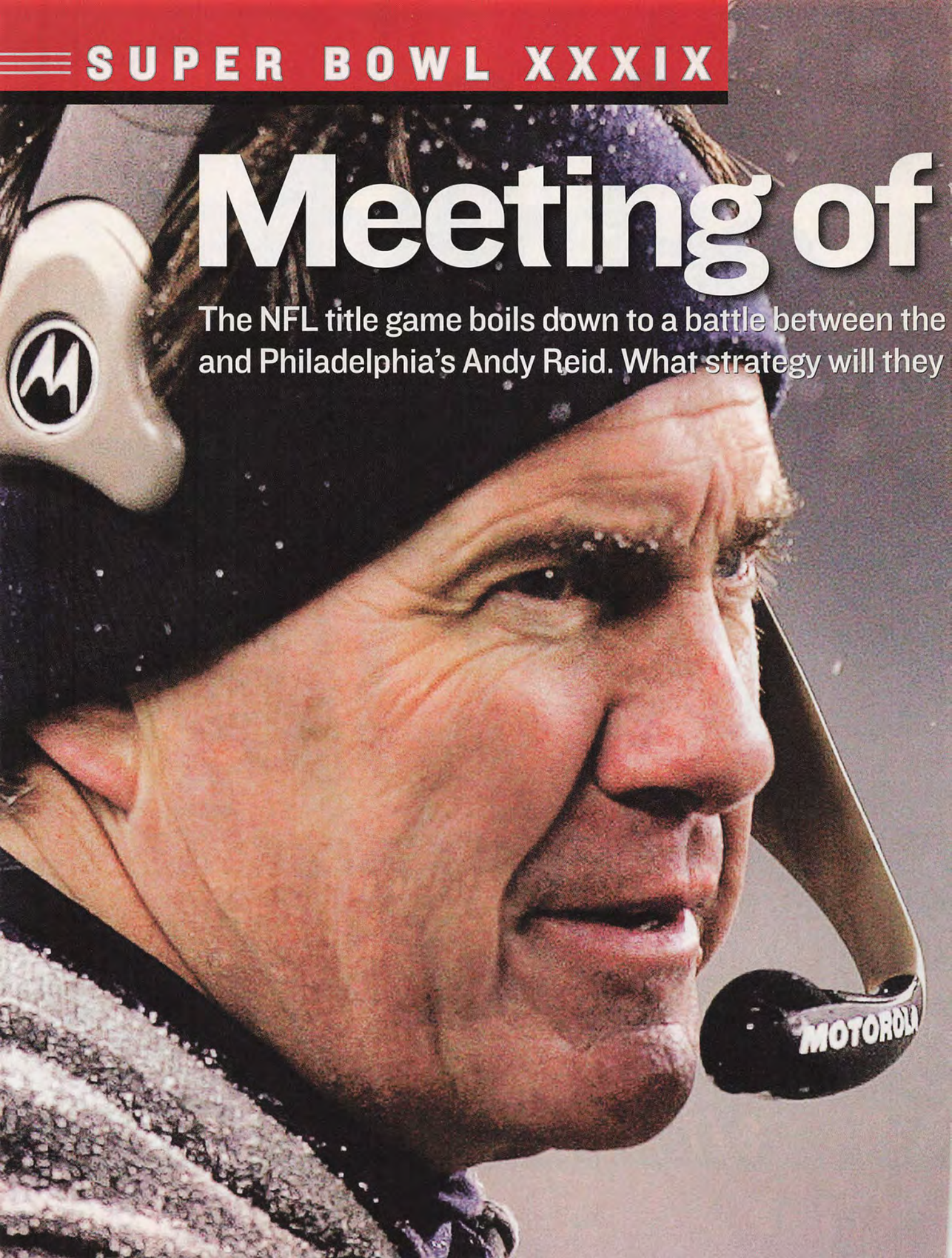
Meeting of

The NFL title game boils down to a battle between the
and Philadelphia's Andy Reid. What strategy will they

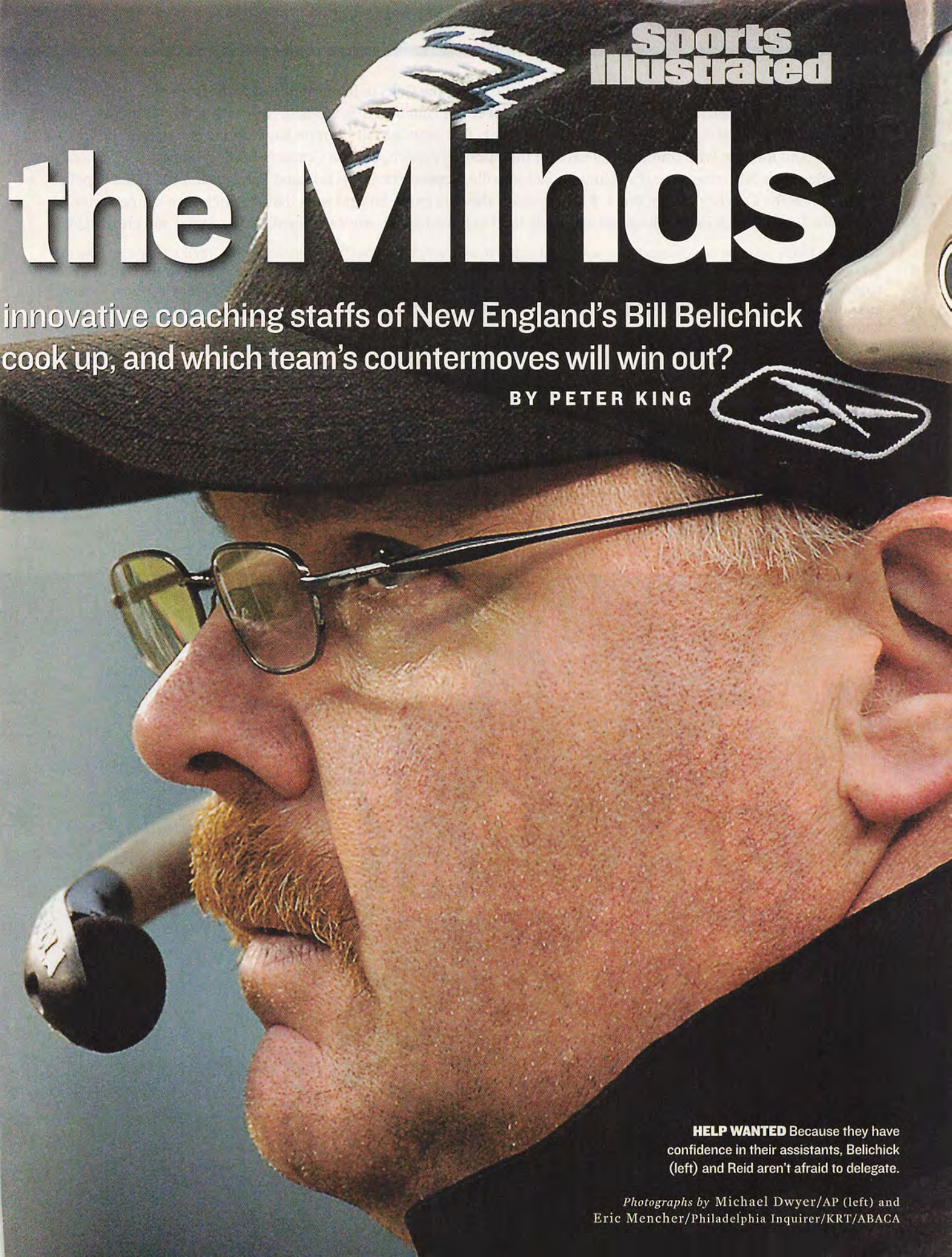


Sports Illustrated

the Minds

innovative coaching staffs of New England's Bill Belichick cook up, and which team's countermoves will win out?

BY PETER KING



HELP WANTED Because they have confidence in their assistants, Belichick (left) and Reid aren't afraid to delegate.

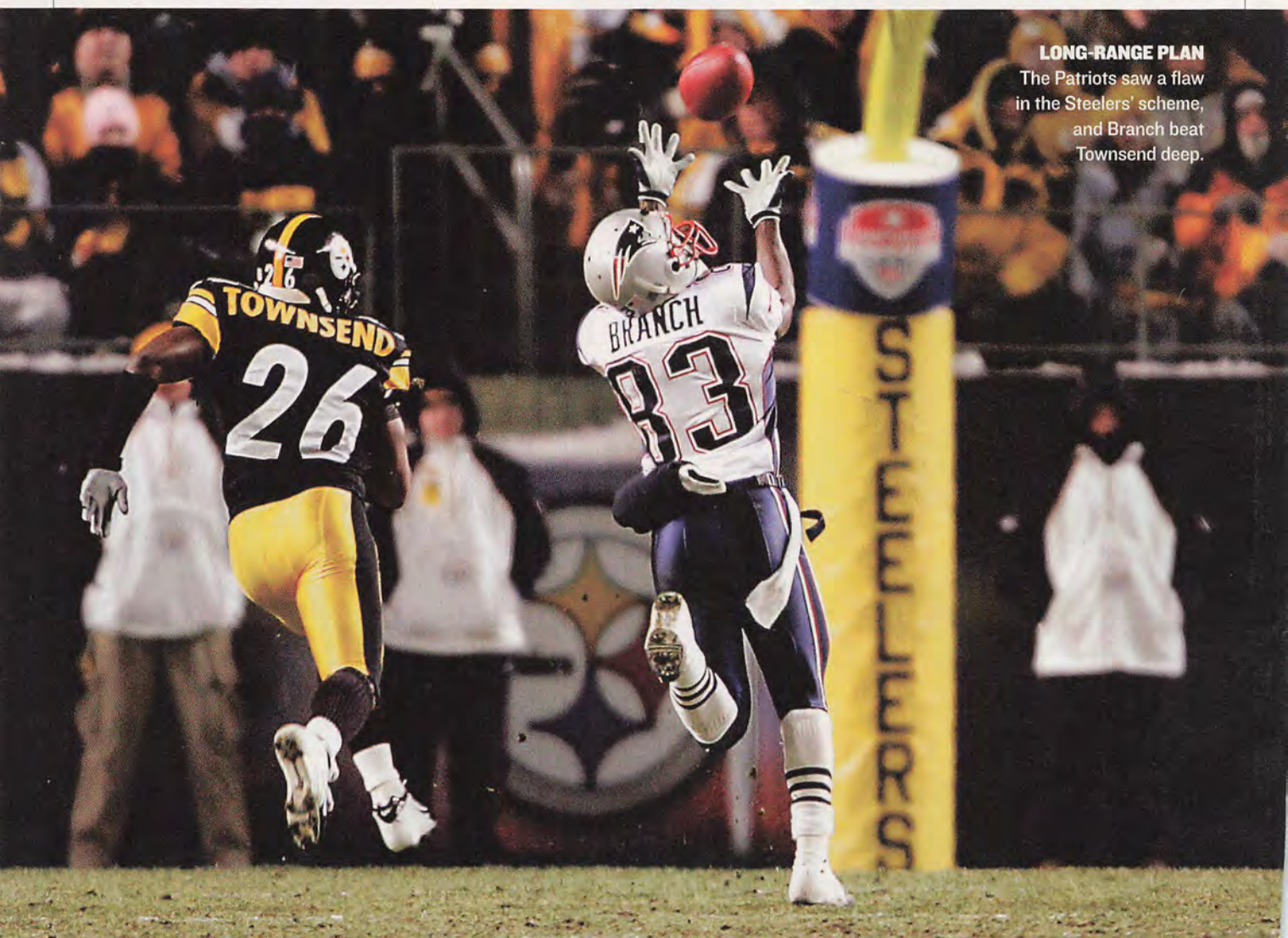
Photographs by Michael Dwyer/AP (left) and Eric Mencher/Philadelphia Inquirer/KRT/ABACA

THE NEW YORK JETS' colossal upset of the Baltimore Colts in January 1969 was the Namath Super Bowl. The San Francisco 49ers' last-minute win over the Cincinnati Bengals in '89, with Joe Cool driving the Niners 92 yards, was the Montana Super Bowl. Two years ago the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' rout of the Oakland Raiders, with countless TV shots of the Bucs' fiery coach, was the Gruden's Revenge Super Bowl. ¶ Look for this Sunday's NFL championship game in Jacksonville, between the New England Patriots and the Philadelphia Eagles, to be the Coaches' Super Bowl. ¶ What makes the title game intriguing is that it matches coaching staffs—headed by Bill Belichick in New England and Andy Reid in Philadelphia—that are equally self-assured and creative. As Tennessee Titans defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz said last week, the Patriots and Eagles are capable "of morphing 180 degrees from game to game, from half to half, into something completely different. That's the sign of a great coaching staff: having the trust and confidence in your coaches and your players to take on new tasks each week and perform at a very high level."

For Reid and his alter ego, offensive coordinator Brad Childress, mutual trust grew out of the time they spent crammed in a Volkswagen in 1986, two assistants talking strategy on their daily drive to the football office at Northern Arizona. For Belichick and his defensive coordinator, Romeo Crennel, their strong ties date to 1981, when they were on the staff of New York Giants coach Ray Perkins. In fact, the chemistry top to bottom on the staffs of both Super Bowl teams must be pretty good. Over the last three years, the staffs have had a total of only four significant departures, and each of those men moved on to accept a coordinator's position with another NFL team. (After Sunday's game, however, New England loses offensive coordinator Charlie Weis, who takes over as coach at Notre Dame, and probably Crennel, who is expected to be named coach of the Cleveland Browns.)

"This is our 23rd, 24th week together, working every day," Childress said last Fri-

The Pats' coaching staff designed the bomb to Branch, and Belichick says that Weis (left) called the play at **"THE PERFECT TIME."**



LONG-RANGE PLAN
The Patriots saw a flaw in the Steelers' scheme, and Branch beat Townsend deep.

HOT TOPIC McNabb, who hit on a career-high 64% of his passes, will work against an injury-riddled secondary.

day. "If you don't get along with the people you work with, working the hours we do, it'll eat a hole in your stomach and you'll never be as productive as you have to be to win in this league."

It gets to the point at which the coaches and their assistants are of the same mind. Leading the Atlanta Falcons 20–10 in the NFC Championship Game, the Eagles had third-and-four at the Atlanta 14 with 5:34 left. As he looked at his laminated play sheet, Reid heard Childress's voice in his headset. "Andy," Childress said from the coaches' box upstairs, "I'm thinking the quarterback draw might. . . ."

"I just had my finger on that," Reid interrupted. "Let's do it."

Reid relayed the play to quarterback Donovan McNabb, who set up in the shotgun and ran for six yards. The clinching touchdown came three plays later.

Terrell Owens, Philadelphia's big-play wideout, was the only offensive player on either Super Bowl squad to be named to the AP's All-Pro team, yet the Patriots scored the fourth-most points in the league during the regular season and the Eagles ranked eighth. Owens missed the last four games with an ankle injury, while New England's two best defensive players, cornerback Ty Law and lineman Richard Seymour, have been sidelined since Oct. 31 and Dec. 26, respectively. Nevertheless, excluding meaningless Eagles defeats in their last two regular-season games, when they flooded the lineup with reserves, the two teams are a combined 31–3.

"The best teams are usually an extension of the coaches," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said last week. "I really see that in these two teams." How will they game-plan and adapt as the action unfolds? That's the Super Bowl within the Super Bowl.

NEW ENGLAND'S versatility on both sides of the ball makes it a unique team. Until late in their reign, the Pittsburgh Steelers of the 1970s methodically mashed defenses with their running game. The 49ers under Bill Walsh always ran the ball well, but they moved the chains with the pass. And the Dallas Cowboys of the 1990s delivered a steady dose of Emmitt Smith, with Troy Aikman passing just enough to keep the defense honest.

The Patriots? Look at New England's play selection in its past three meetings with the Indianapolis Colts:

"If you don't get along with the people you work with, working the hours we do, it'll **EAT A HOLE** in your stomach," says Childress.

• January 2004, Patriots 24, Colts 14: 46% runs;
• September 2004, Patriots 27, Colts 24: 30% runs;
• January 2005, Patriots 20, Colts 3: 57% runs.

"People ask me what offensive system the Patriots run, and I say, 'They don't have one,' " Schwartz says. "[Every week] some coaches say, 'This is what we do.' The Patriots ask, 'What do we need to do to win this week?' "

When each was asked separately to think of a recent play that best illustrated New England's offensive diversity, Belichick and Brady came up with the same one: Brady's 60-yard strike to wideout Deion Branch for the first touchdown against Pittsburgh in the AFC Championship Game. The plan had been to get the speedy Branch one-on-one against cornerback Deshea Townsend on a deep post pattern.

In the week before the game Belichick watched tape of the Steelers with Brady and quarterbacks coach Josh McDaniels, and the three noticed the tendency of safety Troy Polamalu to line up over the slot receiver on certain two-wide, two-tight-end formations. In practice, receivers coach Brian Daboll told the slot receiver who would motion across the formation to the right, David Givens, to run his crossing route 16 yards, rather than the usual 12, so that the Steelers' corner on that side, Willie Williams, would have to commit to Givens and be out of range for a throw to the deep middle. The Pats thought that if Brady eyed Givens, Polamalu would double-team the wideout. At the same time, safety Chris Hope would be occupied underneath by the traffic in the middle and Townsend would be all alone on the faster Branch.

"Charlie, Josh, Brian and I all participated in the coaching and design of the play," Belichick says, "and it was called at the perfect time."

JASON PARKHURST/US PRESSWIRE (BRANCH); JIM ROGASH/WIREIMAGE.COM (WEIS); DAVID BERGMAN (MCNABB); DREW HALLOWELL/ICON SMI

Says Brady, "What was so great about the play is it happened *exactly* the way the coaches said it would."

On defense, look at the different schemes the Patriots used in playoff wins over the Colts and the Steelers. Against downfield-minded Peyton Manning, New England often dropped an inside linebacker (usually the mobile Tedy Bruschi) deep, freeing the safeties to cover the outside. What Manning saw were three punishing hitters ready to separate his receivers from the ball 20 yards downfield; his longest completion was 18 yards. Against Pittsburgh the conventional wisdom was that the Pats should heavily blitz rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. Instead they rushed six or more defenders only once, preferring to fill the secondary with cover players; Roethlisberger threw three interceptions, and two more passes were dropped by New England defenders.

"Romeo encourages differences of opinion [in meetings]," says Rob Ryan, a Patriots assistant for four years who left after the 2003 season to become the defensive coordinator of the Raiders. "He'll listen to everyone, then say, 'O.K., who do we *have* to stop this week?' He likes new ideas. I remember our first Super Bowl year [2001 season], we're getting ready to play Atlanta. We hadn't run any 46 [the high-pressure, high-risk defense perfected by Rob's father, Buddy] all season, but I thought it would work because Atlanta was a big two-tight-end team we could take advantage of. I said to Romeo, 'How about nickel diamond?' That's what we called our 46. We had nine sacks and won the game."

NEW ENGLAND has been the NFL's premier team over the last four years, but Philadelphia isn't far behind. Their records, including playoffs, since the start of the 2001 season: Pats 56–16, Eagles 54–19.

Winning Is Their Business

Friends and owners Robert Kraft and Jeffrey Lurie built their teams for the long run

SOME 25 YEARS ago, on a typically splendid autumn Sunday in New England, the Patriots were playing typically mediocre football at Schaefer Stadium. At halftime two ticked-off season-ticket holders, Robert Kraft and Jeffrey Lurie, met for the first time and together bemoaned the home team's shortcomings as well as the culture of losing that engulfed the franchise. Says Kraft, "Both of us spent a lot of frustrating afternoons sitting on those benches and wishing we had a chance to run things."

AARON JOSEFCZYK/ICON SMI

THAT'S A WRAP A Hollywood producer turned NFL owner, Lurie finally has a Super script in his 11th year in Philly.

When Kraft and Lurie next meet at an NFL game, it will be at Jacksonville's Alltel Stadium on Sunday, each man running a Super Bowl team. Kraft, now the Patriots' owner, and Lurie, owner of the Philadelphia Eagles, head the league's most successful teams of the 21st century. New England has won two of the last three Super Bowls, while Philly has more victories over the last five regular seasons (59) than any other team. Each man transformed a second-rate organization into a model of professional sports excellence.

Considering that Kraft hails from Brookline, Mass., while Lurie grew up just a couple of miles away, in Newton, one has to ask, *What in the name of Paul Revere is going on here? Is it the chowder?* Nah, say both men, if anything it was the lousy football.

"We were common sufferers, at many different stadia, and I think that influenced us," says Lurie, 53. "We've made so many similar decisions [since becoming owners], it's uncanny. Above all, we have treated our teams as jewels, with an eye toward sustaining our success."

Kraft, 63, presides over an astonishingly happy Patriots universe. Quarterback Tom Brady calls him "a very engaging, genuine, forward-thinking person. He goes out of his way to recognize everybody in the organization, be it the starting middle linebacker or the first-year scout. More than anything else, he loves to win. The coaches know it, the players know it and the fans know it."

When James Orthwein put the Patriots on the block in July 1993, Kraft and Lurie submitted bids. Kraft, who'd made his fortune in the paper and packaging industries and who already had the lease on the stadium, won with an offer of $172 million—at the time, the largest amount paid for an NFL franchise.

So Lurie, a former Boston University professor (he has a Ph.D. in social policy) who had become a Hollywood producer in 1985, turned his attention to the Eagles and pried them away from Norman Braman

"We were **COMMON SUFFERERS**, at many different stadia," Lurie says of following the old, woeful Pats. "I think that influenced us."

MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

Like Belichick, Reid gives his coordinators and assistants plenty of authority. On Tuesday mornings, when Reid and his staff devise the passing game plan, 39-year-old quarterbacks coach Pat Shurmur has as much of a say as the more experienced Childress, 48, and assistant head coach Marty Mornhinweg, 42, the former coach of the Detroit Lions. "We've all coached quarterbacks, so we're all opinionated," Childress says. "But if we want to use a play and Pat says Donovan's worried about the backside blitz on it, no problem, we'll change it."

That confidence is passed on to the players. Early in a December road game against the Washington Redskins, Eagles wideout Todd Pinkston, who has a reputation for not making the tough catch, appeared to get alligator arms on a catchable ball in traffic. Pinkston told Reid he lost the ball in the lights, and the coach accepted his explanation. Later in the quarter Childress suggested that Reid call 94 Seal X Slant and Go, a risky play-action pass with only one wideout, Pinkston; he would have to run hard at the safety, then sprint downfield. Pinkston caught a strike from McNabb, and the play went for 80 yards. "Todd practices hurt, he plays hurt," Reid says. "I never doubted him. If he says he lost it in the lights, he lost it in the lights."

After Belichick, the most admired coach in the NFL may be Philly defensive coordinator Jim Johnson. Belichick doesn't gush about many opponents, but he says Johnson is difficult to prepare for "because you don't know what you're going to get, and then, when you see it, he'll adjust to what you're doing pretty quickly." Johnson is known for calling exotic blitzes from all angles, but he has concentrated more on containment and coverage in this postseason, holding quarterbacks Daunte

in May 1994 for a then record $185 million.

Kraft and Lurie were stuck in dilapidated stadiums (Schaefer had been renamed Sullivan, then Foxboro, and the Eagles played in Veterans Stadium) and had coaches (Bill Parcells in New England, Rich Kotite in Philadelphia) with whom they would grow uncomfortable. Later Kraft and Lurie hired coaches, Pete Carroll and Ray Rhodes, respectively, who got to the playoffs in their first two seasons but did not satisfy the organizations' models for long-term success.

DAVID DUROCHIK/SPORTPICS

KRAFT'S SHOW For the fourth time in nine years, Kraft has Patriots fans cheering in an NFL championship game.

Finally the owners scored with personnel-savvy coaches—the Pats' Bill Belichick and the Eagles' Andy Reid—though they were considered by many to be dubious picks at the time.

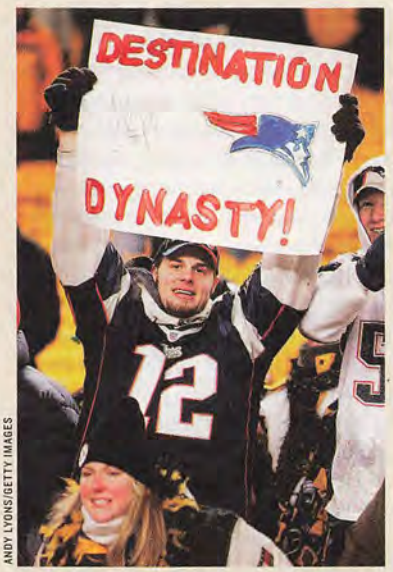
"We both ended up making very unpopular choices," says Lurie. "He traded a No. 1 pick [to the New York Jets] for Belichick. I hired a guy [Reid] who hadn't even been a coordinator. Ray [Rhodes] did a good job the first few years, but he coached more on emotion and short-term analysis. Unless your goal is to have a one-shot deal, you have to build a team [whose success] is sustainable."

Ultimately, what both owners learned was how to manage the salary cap. Guided by Jonathan Kraft, the eldest of Robert's four sons and a Harvard MBA, the Patriots put together a model based on gauging the value of each position and the value of each player relative to others in the league. Similarly, Lurie turned to boyhood friend Joe Banner, now the Eagles' president, to develop a successful formula for staying under the cap.

Both franchises rely heavily on the coach's personnel acumen and prefer to re-sign players—often with time remaining on their contracts, before they reach peak market value—rather than bring in high-priced free agents. Though the Eagles deviated from that philosophy following their third consecutive NFC Championship Game loss in January 2004, bringing in wideout Terrell Owens and defensive end Jevon Kearse, Lurie says the club is still "in great shape" capwise. Ditto the Patriots, who a source says are likely to announce several contract extensions in the weeks following the Super Bowl.

The similarities between the two organizations extend to their sparkling new stadiums. The Krafts, after an aborted relocation arrangement with Hartford, used Jonathan's creative financing plan to build Gillette Stadium for $325 million (it opened in 2002) without using public funds or resorting to personal seat licenses. Among other things, he locked in historically low interest rates and worked out a deal with

Says Brady, "[Kraft] goes out of his way to **RECOGNIZE EVERYBODY** in the organization, be it the starting linebacker or the first-year scout."



ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Salomon Smith Barney to roll over 28-day loans repeatedly for 25 years. One year later the Eagles moved into Lincoln Financial Field, which cost Lurie $340 million and taxpayers $180 million.

"We're both high-revenue clubs because we've taken such big risks," Lurie says of sinking a great amount of personal capital into the teams in an effort to generate long-term success. "I think the key for Robert and me was that we looked at the franchises we were buying and said, 'Why couldn't these teams be like the 49ers of the '80s and '90s?' "

Rest assured, there are probably plenty of ticked-off season-ticket holders in San Francisco wondering why the 49ers can't be more like the Patriots and the Eagles.

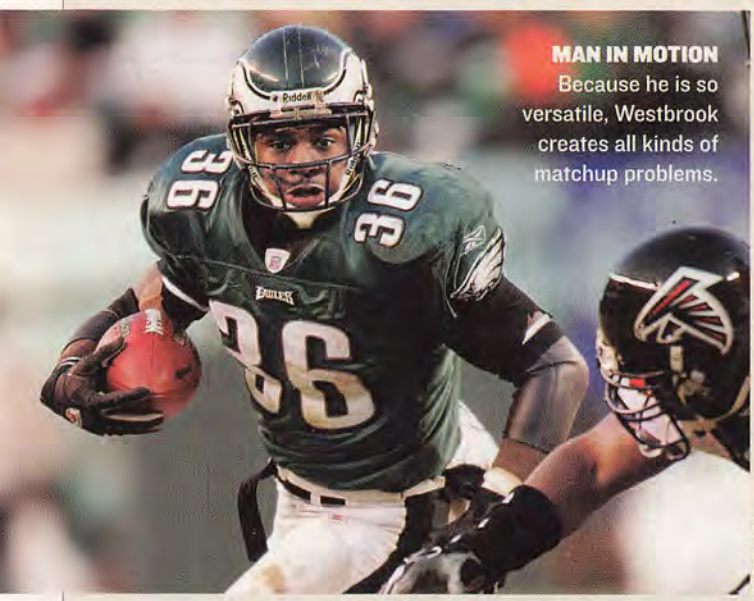
—Michael Silver

Culpepper of the Minnesota Vikings and Michael Vick of the Falcons to one touchdown pass combined. Over the last 47 minutes of the NFC title game, a frustrated Vick didn't run with the ball once. "The thing about a Jim Johnson game plan," says Eagles defensive end Derrick Burgess, "is when you look at it, you don't think you have to do anything special. If everyone does his job, there's no doubt in our minds we should win."

SO HOW will these teams attack each other? Last year stopping Carolina Panthers running back Stephen Davis was viewed by the Patriots as the key to winning Super Bowl XXXVIII; Davis was held to 49 total yards. This year containing the mobile McNabb will most likely be their primary focus on defense. Look for Crennel to have one of his fast linebackers (Bruschi or Mike Vrabel) stay home to make sure McNabb doesn't run far. "The one thing you can count on is, McNabb won't have time to

What Brian Westbrook Means to the Eagles

Who knows where he'll line up next? The all-purpose back is Donovan McNabb's main man



MAN IN MOTION Because he is so versatile, Westbrook creates all kinds of matchup problems.

AL TIELEMANS

HE DOESN'T have the flair of Terrell Owens or the following of Donovan McNabb, but Eagles running back Brian Westbrook is becoming a Philadelphia favorite. He's no longer viewed as a diminutive player (5' 10", 205) out of a Division I-AA program who surely couldn't withstand an NFL pounding. Coming off a breakout 2004 season, he is seen as a multidimensional threat who gives defenses fits.

He'll line up at running back, in the slot or at wideout, and he's capable of making a momentous play every time he touches the ball. "Brian is the key to our offense," says fullback Josh Parry. "Everybody talks about TO, but Brian is the most versatile player I've seen in a while."

Westbrook has drawn comparisons to Marshall Faulk, the Rams' multitalented back, and for good reason. During the regular season Westbrook rushed for 812 yards, caught 73 passes (an NFL high for running backs) for 703 yards and scored nine touchdowns. Not bad for a player who didn't even enter training camp as Philadelphia's featured back.

In 2003 he split carries with Correll Buckhalter and Duce Staley, while also excelling as a return man. But after Staley left as a free agent and Buckhalter went down in August with a season-ending knee injury, Westbrook took the ball and ran with it. "We caught defenses off guard last year because we had different personnel in the game at various times," says Westbrook, a 2002 third-round draft pick out of Villanova. "This year teams have prepared for me more, and we've had to work harder to create [opportunities]."

Defenses are constantly adjusting as Westbrook moves around in the offense. "He's hard to find," says Vikings defensive end Lance Johnstone. "If they come out with two tight ends, he might start as the single back and motion out. Or he could start in the slot and they could have no backs. It's hard to make adjustments because you have to account for him first. He can create all kinds of mismatches because they use him so creatively."

In the divisional playoff the Vikings covered him primarily with linebackers. In the NFC Championship Game the Falcons chipped Westbrook with defensive ends and shadowed him with linebackers and nickelbacks. In those two games Westbrook had 252 total yards (166 rushing, 86 receiving) and scored a touchdown.

So what will the Patriots do? "I think New England will get after Brian," says Eagles offensive coordinator Brad Childress. "They'll try to make it hard for him to get off the line of scrimmage. But the thing is, you can't completely bastardize your defense to handle him. Atlanta talked about covering him with [strong safety] Bryan Scott, but [Westbrook] can show up in places that safeties just can't play."

It's a dimension that was missing during Philly's playoff run last year, after Westbrook was lost in the regular-season finale with a torn left triceps. Now he is McNabb's primary weapon. "If teams are going to focus on me, that's going to open things for other people," Westbrook says. "That's what TO brought to this offense. He took a lot of pressure off everybody else. Now that role belongs to me." —*Jeffri Chadiha*

WHEN PHILADELPHIA HAS THE BALL: KEY MATCHUPS

Eagles WR Greg Lewis versus Patriots DB Hank Poteat

If he gets on the field at all, Terrell Owens isn't likely to be much of a deep threat. That job falls to Lewis, who had the longest gain (45 yards) in the NFC Championship Game. He's the fastest player on the roster, and he'll line up wide, usually on the left side, whenever Philadelphia is in slot formation. Poteat, a free agent signed on Jan. 10, played the right corner in nickel and dime defenses in the AFC title game and held up surprisingly well. If New England uses Poteat the same way on Sunday, the Eagles will test him deep, trying to get Lewis against him in man coverage.

Eagles LT Tra Thomas versus Patriots DE Jarvis Green

Playing in place of the injured Richard Seymour, Green was the best lineman on the field in the AFC Championship Game. He did a terrific job neutralizing the left side of the Pittsburgh line, where the Steelers like to run, and he was active in the pass rush. Thomas is a mauler who can be effective blocking down on running plays to his outside, but at times he falls asleep. Green, or Seymour if he's back from his knee injury, can beat Thomas with leverage and quickness.

Eagles RB Brian Westbrook versus Patriots ILB Tedy Bruschi

When New England goes into its nickel or dime, Bruschi is alone in the middle. He's vulnerable to the quarterback draw, if a blocker can get to him, or a draw by Westbrook, who can get through the hole in a hurry. Westbrook is also valuable as a receiver working the short zone, which takes him into Bruschi's territory, or lining up in the slot or on the flank and attacking the deeper areas. —*Paul Zimmerman*

ad-lib," Ryan says. "I'm sure he's not going to beat them."

But McNabb has been unflappable in and out of the pocket all season. He has completed 64% of his passes, up dramatically from his 57% career mark. Philly will probably continue to play *Where's Waldo?* with running back Brian Westbrook *(box, page 48)*, who will be even more effective if Owens can contribute.

The New England offense will have to stave off two aggressive and quick defensive ends, Burgess and Jevon Kearse, as well as run-stuffing middle linebacker Jeremiah Trotter. This could be a game in which Weis turns Brady loose because the Patriots can attack Philadelphia's corners more effectively than they can the front seven.

All of which means that the Eagles will probably run it 45 times, and New England running back Corey Dillon will butt heads with Trotter all night. That's the beauty of both the Patriots and the Eagles. You just never know. □

What Corey Dillon Means to the Patriots

The onetime malcontent has never been happier—and the team's run game has never been better

ON THEIR way to winning two of the past three Super Bowls, the Patriots employed an offense that was more efficient than dominant, mixing a vanilla running game with multiple short-pass packages. The lack of production on the ground was glaring in 2003, when New England ranked 27th in the league. So during the off-season the team went shopping for an upgrade at running back, someone who could take pressure off quarterback Tom Brady and be a workhorse when the weather turned foul in December and January.

No available back intrigued the Patriots like the Bengals' Corey Dillon, who at 225 pounds was a power runner who could also outrun defensive backs. After speaking with many of his Cincinnati and former college coaches and teammates about him—Dillon had become contentious during seven seasons with the Bengals—New England coach Bill Belichick and general manager Scott Pioli deemed the man who had rushed for more than 1,000 yards in a season six times a risk worth taking. They got him in exchange for a second-round pick in last April's draft.

As it turned out, there was no risk at all. In 15 games Dillon rushed for 1,635 yards, a franchise record, and 12 touchdowns, both career highs. He averaged 4.7 yards per carry for an offense that ranked third in the league in rushing. Dillon also helped the Patriots flip their pass-heavy offensive script: They ran on 53% of their 1,009 snaps this season, compared to 47% of 1,010 snaps in 2003.

DAMIAN STROHMEYER

PAYING OFF Dillon set a franchise record as the Pats shot up the NFL rushing rankings.

Known for his bruising running style and durability, Dillon missed only a Halloween loss in Pittsburgh, because of a thigh injury. And, at 30, he showed that he hasn't lost a step. "Like all great backs, Corey is a load if he breaks that first tackle," says new 49ers coach Mike Nolan, formerly the Ravens' defensive coordinator. "When he hits the secondary, most D-backs are unable to, or uninterested in, tackling him."

With defenses having to work to contain a back of Dillon's caliber, the Patriots' deep passing game opened up. During the season Brady averaged 7.79 yards per pass attempt, almost one yard better than his previous season high. He completed 44 passes that went for more than 20 yards and 10 that went longer than 50 yards, threw for 3,692 yards and had a 92.6 passer rating—all career bests.

Late in the season Dillon, who had a career-high 345 carries, delivered. Over the last five games he averaged 109 rushing yards. Then, in the AFC divisional playoff against the Colts in snowy Gillette Stadium, he ran for 144 yards in helping New England control the ball for 37:21 in a 20–3 win. "Corey gave New England an attitude, especially in the fourth quarter," Nolan says. "With Corey back there, you hit the last 15 minutes and [defenders] think, Enough's enough."

Perhaps most important, Dillon is the "happiest he's ever been," says his agent, Steve Feldman. Indeed, soon after the Patriots had advanced to the Super Bowl with a 41–27 win over Pittsburgh in the AFC Championship Game, Dillon called Feldman and delivered this message: "I never want to play anywhere else, ever again." —*Josh Elliott*

WHEN NEW ENGLAND HAS THE BALL: KEY MATCHUPS

Patriots LT Matt Light and RT Brandon Gorin versus Eagles DEs Jevon Kearse and Derrick Burgess

Kearse and Burgess are speed rushers, and in the NFC title game they distinguished themselves by putting heat on Michael Vick and by dropping into a spy position at times. They won't have to worry about spying Tom Brady, but they won't get much blitz help, either, because Brady gets to his hot reads too quickly. Light and Gorin can be beaten with speed, which could force the Pats to max-protect. That would mean fewer receivers running routes, giving the edge to Philly's defense.

Patriots QB Tom Brady versus Eagles secondary

The NFL's best money passer goes against the finest secondary in the league. Twice in the AFC title game when he sent only two receivers downfield, Brady looked off Steelers DBs and then connected on deep passes. But such deception won't work against safeties Brian Dawkins and Michael Lewis and corners Lito Sheppard and Sheldon Brown. Brady will see some blitzing, but only as a changeup. My guess is that New England will use a short passing game to set up a heavy dose of running back Corey Dillon—or vice versa.

Patriots RB Corey Dillon versus Eagles MLB Jeremiah Trotter

Trotter has injected a measure of toughness into a run defense that was anemic before he became a starter, on Nov. 15. Dillon has added punch to a ground game that was merely an annoyance to defenses in past years. He's a good cutback and misdirection runner, which could bother Trotter if he has to devote too much effort to getting off blocks. —P.Z.

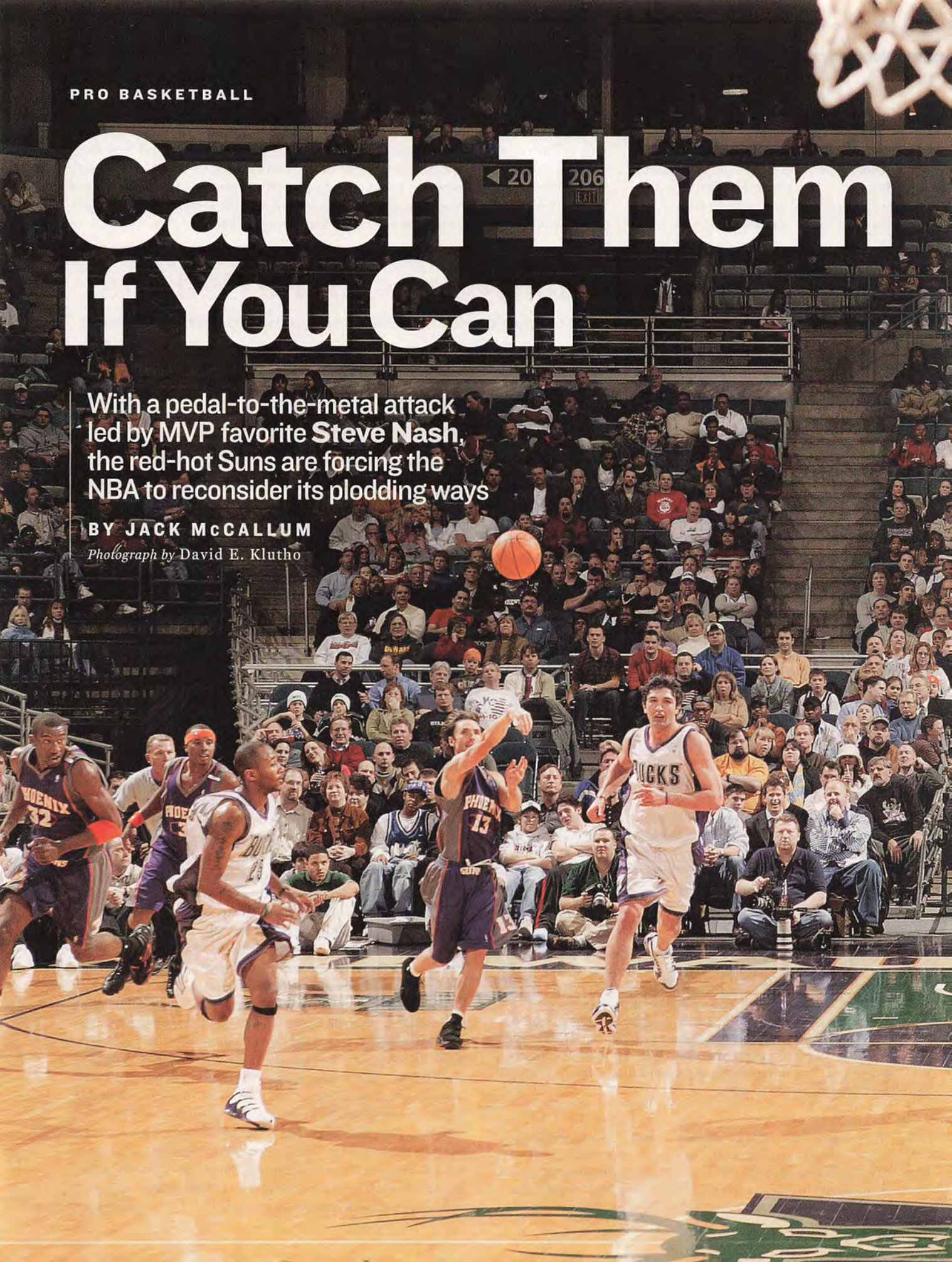
PRO BASKETBALL

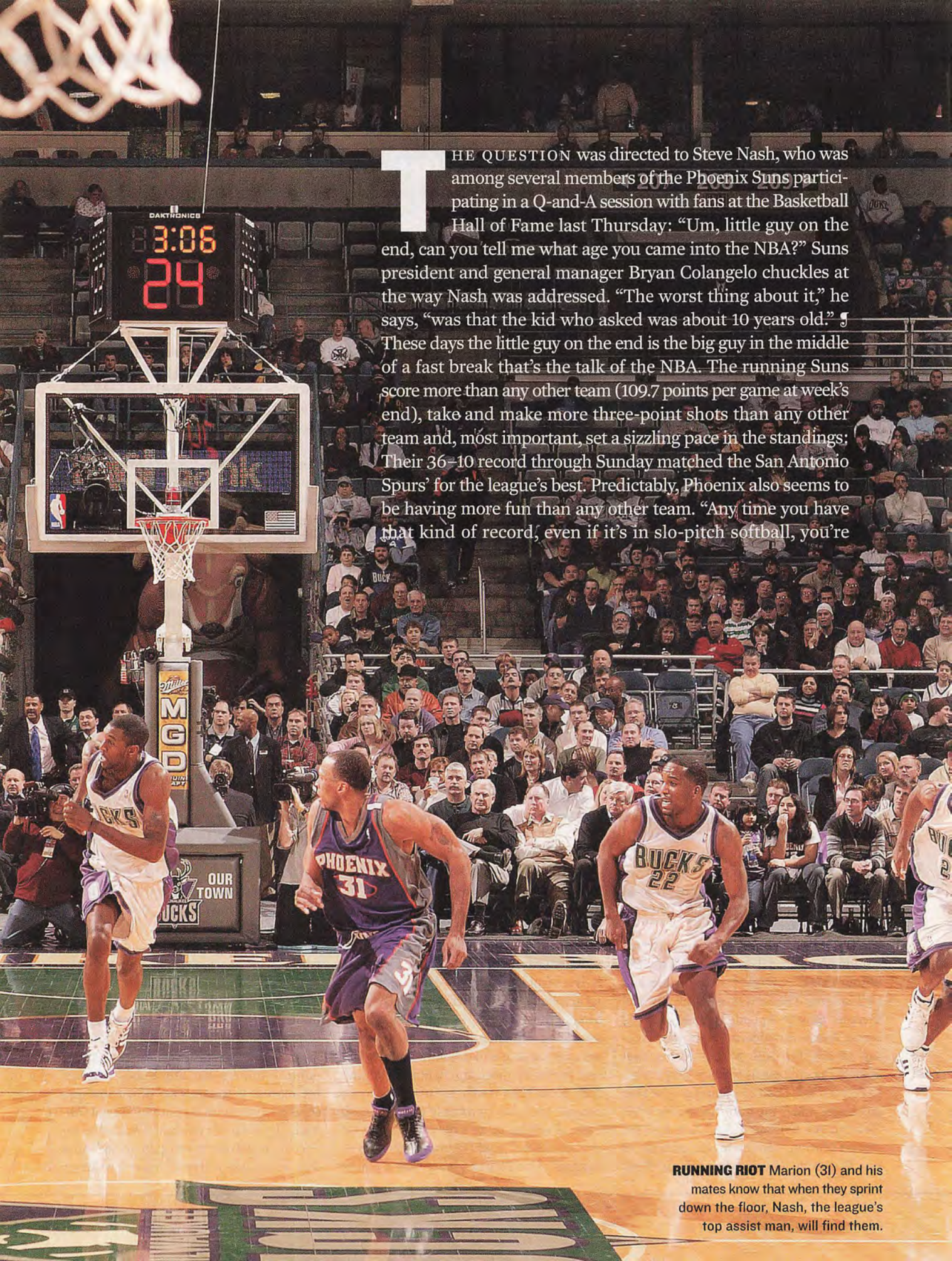
Catch Them If You Can

With a pedal-to-the-metal attack led by MVP favorite **Steve Nash**, the red-hot Suns are forcing the NBA to reconsider its plodding ways

BY JACK McCALLUM

Photograph by David E. Klutho





THE QUESTION was directed to Steve Nash, who was among several members of the Phoenix Suns participating in a Q-and-A session with fans at the Basketball Hall of Fame last Thursday: "Um, little guy on the end, can you tell me what age you came into the NBA?" Suns president and general manager Bryan Colangelo chuckles at the way Nash was addressed. "The worst thing about it," he says, "was that the kid who asked was about 10 years old." ¶ These days the little guy on the end is the big guy in the middle of a fast break that's the talk of the NBA. The running Suns score more than any other team (109.7 points per game at week's end), take and make more three-point shots than any other team and, most important, set a sizzling pace in the standings: Their 36–10 record through Sunday matched the San Antonio Spurs' for the league's best. Predictably, Phoenix also seems to be having more fun than any other team. "Any time you have that kind of record, even if it's in slo-pitch softball, you're

RUNNING RIOT Marion (31) and his mates know that when they sprint down the floor, Nash, the league's top assist man, will find them.

going to be happy," says Nash. "Put it at the pro level, with a team that wasn't supposed to be this good, and imagine how much fun it's been."

Wasn't supposed to be this good? You think? The Suns went 29–53 last season, and, despite the free-agent additions of Nash and swingman Quentin Richardson, were not even considered a lock for the Western Conference playoffs. Now they are on track to become only the ninth team in history to go from 50 losses to 50 wins in one season. Yet slow-down tactics have become so pervasive that Phoenix's resurgence is viewed skeptically. "A different type of science project," Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle calls the Suns, whose formula won't be fully tested until the postseason: Can flash dancers succeed at a time that has long favored bumpers and grinders?

Some say *yes*. "They're as good a contender as any team to win a championship," says Miami Heat coach Stan Van Gundy. "I don't understand people who think otherwise."

Others *no*. "All of Phoenix's success right now doesn't mean anything," says Golden State Warriors assistant Mario Elie.

A scouting report left in the visitors' locker room at America West Arena offers the stock pursed-lip rebuke to Phoenix's style. It read, in part, "The Suns will run off misses, makes, out-of-bounds plays, half-court out-of-bounds plays, tip plays, anything. *There is literally nothing that is frowned upon.*" The emphasis was added by Phoenix coach Mike D'Antoni, who related the story of finding the report (he won't say for the record which team had written it), which has become a source of both amusement and motivation. "[The scout] was more or less saying we just roll the balls out there and let 'em play," says D'Antoni. "But I remember frowning at least once or twice this season. I just can't remember at what."

He certainly grimaced during a stretch last month in which Nash missed all or most of four games with a left thigh bruise and back spasms. The Suns dropped all four and averaged only 86.3 points while 22-year-old center Amare Stoudemire, who was shooting 58.2%, hit only 37.8% during that stretch. Phoenix needs Nash as desperately as *People* needs Brad and Jennifer—the little guy on the end is the front-runner for MVP. "We can run without Steve," says forward Shawn Marion, "but he makes us want to run. We just do it better when he's out there. And we know we have to run to be good."

SUNS' DANCE On the rare occasions when teams slow the Phoenix fast break, Nash can still make all the right moves in the half-court.

Strong Points

AT WEEK'S end the Suns led the NBA in scoring, and their margin over the second-place Wizards was the largest such differential in 20 years. They also had a better record than any of their high-scoring predecessors.

LEADING SCORERS	WIN PCT.	SCORING AVG.	MARGIN
2004–05 SUNS	.783	109.7	7.4 ppg
1991–92 WARRIORS	.671	118.7	6.5 ppg
1997–98 LAKERS	.744	105.5	4.4 ppg
1992–93 SUNS	.756	113.4	3.3 ppg
1990–91 NUGGETS	.244	119.9	3.3 ppg

Before Nash signed as a free agent last July, D'Antoni had already planned to install a fast-break attack with Leandro Barbosa, a 22-year-old Brazilian, as his quarterback. The Suns had two gazelles in Stoudemire and Marion (whose nickname is Trix—from *The Matrix*—because his aerial acrobatics defy belief) as well as an all-around threat in 6' 7" swingman Joe Johnson. D'Antoni spent most of the last two decades playing and coaching in Italy and was therefore more amenable to running than most NBA coaches. "It's not like we ran pell-mell, but I probably wouldn't have been as willing to try a new style if not for my time there," said D'Antoni, who was so famous as an Italian player that a young American, name of Kobe, who grew up in Italy started wearing number 8 in his honor. "I won all kinds of different ways over there, both as a player and a coach. I thought running was the best way to win here, and if nothing else, I figured we'd be entertaining."

D'Antoni realized that he would be ceding much of the control that his NBA peers love to have. Coaches make decisions in the half-court; players make decisions in transition. "Sure, I had trepidations," D'Antoni says. "Nobody wants to get fired two weeks into the season." He felt better about his commitment when Nash accepted Colangelo's six-year, $66 million deal—which owner Robert Sarver green-lighted two weeks after an investment group he headed paid $401 million to buy the team—and when the Los Angeles Clippers failed to match Colangelo's six-year, $44 million offer for Richardson, a willing runner and an even more able three-point gunner.

Because of Nash's headlong approach, his durability has been questioned. But before his thigh bruise, he had missed only four games in three years. He is a consummate pro who each year refines his off-season training so that he can maintain his frenetic pace. Last summer Nash worked long hours with Vancouver physiotherapist Rick Celebrini, breaking down what he calls "every conceivable basketball-related movement" in "a total amalgamation of basketball and conditioning." For example, Nash would dribble at top speed and come to a quick stop, and Celebrini would gauge whether or not he dropped his hip. "If you do that, your efficiency in turning and changing directions goes down," says Nash, 31, who was averaging 15.7 points on 51.8% shooting and a league-high 11.0 assists at week's end. "On your own, you could never figure out those subtle sloppy things you do with your body."

Even with Nash and his properly positioned hip in the lineup, it's one thing to preach the idea of transition basketball, another to perfect execution. "Except for natural runners, like Steve, most players' inclination is to take two slow steps and see if everyone else is running," says D'Antoni. "By then it's too late. We had to indoctrinate players to run right away." After that lesson was learned, there were kinks.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

"I'd start running but not looking," says Stoudemire, "and I'd get hit by a pass I didn't even see. One time Steve bounced a pass through somebody else's legs to get it to me. I said, *Damn*."

Besides the free-agent signings, the pivotal personnel move was installing the 6' 7", 228-pound Marion at power forward. He's more athletic than most small forwards, never mind most of the big guys he's matched up against. That's why D'Antoni shuns the Smallball label applied to his team, preferring Skillball. True, Marion has trouble guarding the marquee fours, such as Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett, but who doesn't?

The Suns' fast break doesn't come with a detailed how-to manual; they may be a science project, but their go-go O is more art than science. *Spacing* is mentioned but nobody obsesses about *lanes*. "The ball seeks out where it should go," Nash says. The key is relentlessness. Jim Jackson, a 6' 6" veteran acquired by the Suns last month, played in 2002–03 with a team considered reasonably up-tempo, the Sacramento Kings. "But no matter how much we talked about getting out and running in Sacramento, we ran to spots," says Jackson. "Here, you just *run*." And never stop. "The Suns are determined to run the ball [down] your throat," says Portland Trail Blazers guard Damon Stoudamire. "Usually a team that likes to run slows down and gets more conservative if they go cold for a while. But Phoenix doesn't let a couple of misses deter them from doing what they do."

The Suns believe that with Nash running a read-and-react transition attack, they are essentially unscoutable. "I don't know how you script against something when the offensive team isn't even sure what it's doing," says D'Antoni. That doesn't mean some teams aren't good at stopping the break, the Spurs (who are 2–0 against Phoenix) being the best of all. But besides curtailing Nash and coping with the rim-rattling finishes of Stoudemire and Marion, Phoenix opponents have to contest with transition three-pointers—what Richardson calls "arriving with the second fleet." Nash will often penetrate deep just to kick it back to Marion (66 threes), Johnson (96) and especially Richardson (139), who at week's end was on course to break the NBA season record for attempts from beyond the arc. "Perimeter shots and threes are easier in transition than in the half-court," says Johnson. "You're in rhythm, the juices are flowing, and if you're in your spot, you won't be surprised to get it, because Steve will find you." In fact, some coaches, like the Chicago Bulls' Scott Skiles, believe the way to stop Phoenix is to stay home with the shooters and not double Nash in the lane. "Nash may get 30 on you," says Skiles, "but it's his 14-assist games that kill you."

If the break is cut off, the Suns go right into "drag," a simple pick-and-roll that defines their secondary break. "Nash and Stoudemire have developed almost a Stockton-to-Malone relationship," observes Minnesota Timberwolves coach Flip Saunders. If drag drags, the Suns are still effective with their set-up offense, as long as Nash is on the floor. "What makes the Suns so tough," says Heat guard Damon Jones, "is that they do all that running, but they can still get a solid shot in the half-court because Nash will get them one." Phoenix can isolate Stoudemire, clear a lane for Marion, Johnson and now Jackson, or find Richardson for a Q-ball from beyond the arc. "Even if we walked it up," said D'Antoni, "we'd still be a pretty good team."

Perhaps that's all they are now. Perhaps their lack of depth (the five starters all play big minutes, and the Suns traded three players to get Jackson) or their inexperience (their average age is only 26.7) will ultimately derail them. Perhaps their propensity to give up offensive rebounds (they allow more than any other team in the league since they're most interested in getting out and running) will be fatal in the postseason. Or perhaps the D'Antoni paradigm is simply ill-conceived in today's NBA. "You have to have a go-to guy when the game slows down in the playoffs," says Warriors guard Derek Fisher, who won three championships with the Los Angeles Lakers, "because it always does."

D'Antoni was out of the country in the 1980s, when the NBA gradually turned from a graceful track meet into a heavyweight muck in the mud. He finds today's conventional wisdom alternately irritating and amusing. "If we don't go very far, it's because our team isn't good enough," D'Antoni insists, "not because our basic philosophy is flawed." He can't resist adding, "And certainly not because I didn't do enough frowning." □

PHOENIX RISING Stoudemire has piled up a team-high 26.1 points a game by going full-speed upcourt and full-tilt at the basket.

JOHN W. MCDONOUGH

There's Joy in 1llinois

Ignited by a three-guard lineup, the top-ranked Illini have blown through opponents with surpassing ease. But will they have enough muscle in March?

BY GRANT WAHL

Photograph by Michael J. LeBrecht II/1Deuce3 Photography

IF SPORTING another man's jersey is the ultimate sign of athletic respect, then one of the gamers in Dee Brown's closet helps explain why Illinois has the most feared backcourt in America. Alongside the typical throwbacks—Michael Jordan, George Gervin, Dick Butkus—hangs the blue number 5 of Brown's fellow Illini guard Deron Williams. Wait a second, Dee, you wear your teammate's jersey out in public? "Of course," says Brown, admiring his sidekick's threads like a Savile Row tailor. "Deron's my favorite point guard in college basketball." ¶ Considering that the Stylin' Illini have two other popular stars at the position—Brown and his roommate Luther Head—it's no wonder Illinois has been the story of the season. At week's end the Illini had spent nine weeks at No. 1 and administered double-digit beatdowns to No. 7 Wake Forest, No. 17 Gonzaga and No. 18 Cincinnati. Inevitably, their 21–0 start and a weaker-than-usual Big Ten spawned the tantalizing (albeit burdensome) question, Can Illinois run the table? After all, if the Illini could survive Tuesday's road showdown with No. 12 Michigan State, they would most likely enter March with a chance to fulfill the prophecy on the poster hanging in Brown and Head's living room: ILLINOIS BASKETBALL: HISTORY IN THE MAKING.

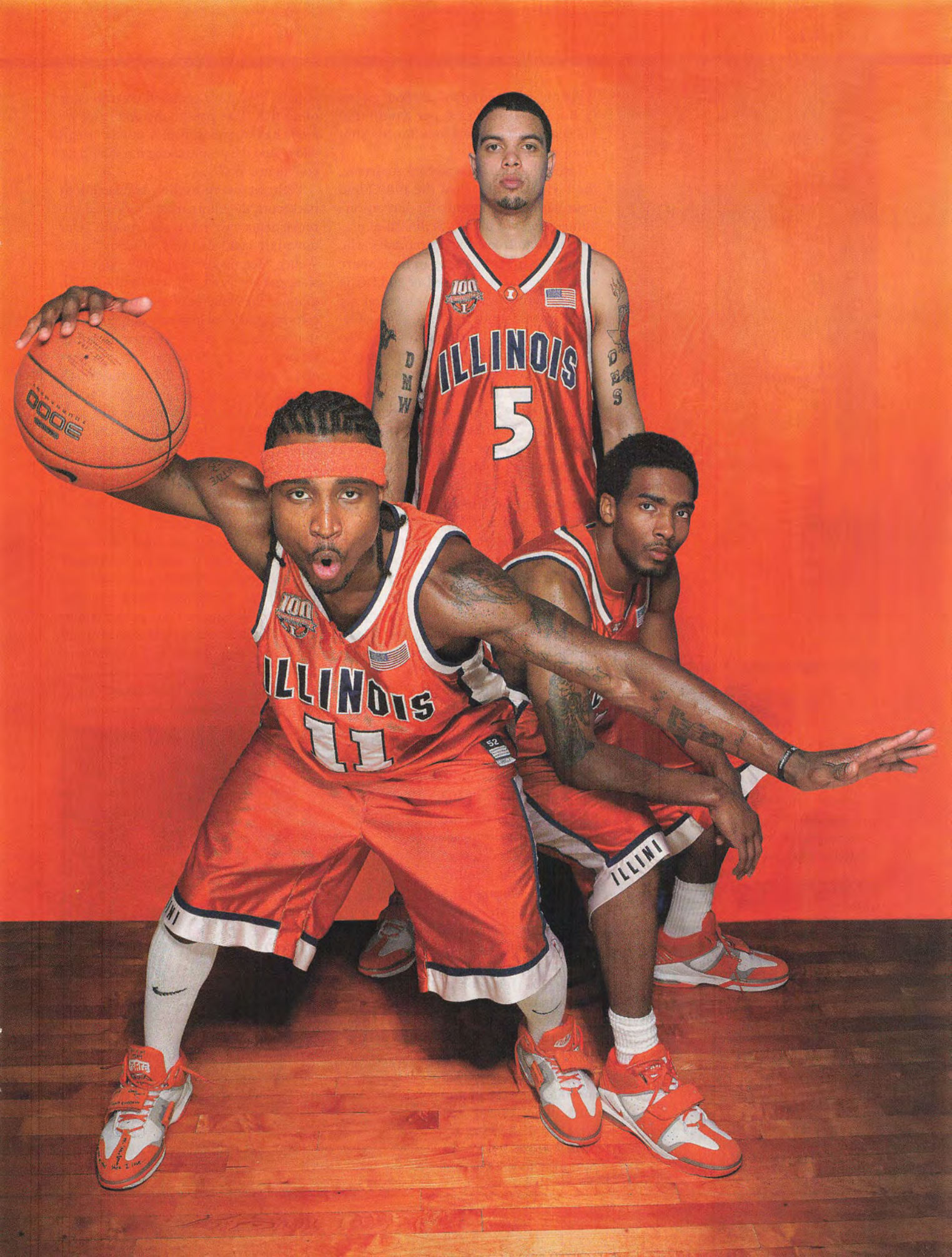
Coach Bruce Weber won't go there—not yet, even after his team had dusted Wisconsin 75–65 in Madison on Jan. 25, ending the nation's longest home court winning streak at 38 games. "I'm worried way more about winning the Big Ten than going undefeated," Weber says in his trademark screech. Perhaps, but the Illini's hegemony was plain to see: Including last Saturday's 89–66 annihilation of Minnesota in Champaign, only three opponents had lost by single digits to Weber's wrecking crew. "I haven't seen a team in 10 to 12 years swing the ball as quickly and efficiently as they do," says Gonzaga coach Mark Few, whose Bulldogs allowed 24 assists on 34 baskets in an 89–72 loss to Illinois on Nov. 27. "If you're not playing against them, it's a joy to watch because it's how basketball should be played."

When it comes to maximizing smart passes and minimizing mistakes, the Illini are operating at a historic level indeed. In the four years since the NCAA started tracking team turnovers as an official stat, no Division I school has had an assist-to-turnover ratio better than 1.57. At week's end Illinois was clicking at an astonishing 1.80 *(chart, page 56)*. "If we have one commandment, it's to pass the ball to the open man," says Weber. "Instead of shooting with a hand in your face, get it to the next guy, and the next time he'll reciprocate. Passing is a lost art, which is why I'm blessed with these guys."

While a few elite squads may have two All-America candidates at the guard positions—Duke, Kansas, North Carolina and Wake Forest come to mind—only the Illini have three. "The key to our success is that all of us are point guards who can distribute and shoot the ball," says

THREE POINTS Smart passes, few turnovers are the trademarks of interchangeable guards Williams (5), Brown (11) and Head.

JOHN BIEVER


ILLINOIS
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Williams, who's so fanatical about assists (a Big Ten–leading 7.0 per game) that his coaches wish he'd look for his shot more often.

Led by Kendall Gill and Nick Anderson, the Flyin' Illini reached the 1989 Final Four with their skywalking one-on-one athleticism, but today's Stylin' Illini play with the ego-free ethic of comrades who wear each other's jerseys in their spare time. "It would be easy for Dee and Deron to say, 'Screw this, I'm going to get my numbers and go to the NBA,' " says forward Nick Smith. "But nobody's been like that." For Deron (rhymes with *sharin'*), setting up his teammates is nothing new: He performed the same task for Indiana gunner Bracey Wright when they played together at The Colony High outside Dallas. "I was always in his shadow, but I never had a problem with that," says Williams, who started casting his own last year, leading the Illini in points (14.0 per game) and assists (6.2).

Williams was the Big Ten preseason player of the year and is the backcourt trio's top all-around player, but Brown provides the most energy, sparking the punishing Illini fast break. "People love to see guys playing so unselfishly, so fluid," says Brown, whose charisma, orange headband-and-mouthpiece combo and unruly 'fraids (so dubbed by teammates to describe his half-'fro, half-braids hairstyle) make his the most recognizable face on the team.

Yet out of all the Stylin' Illini, the one having the best season is Brown's fellow Chicagoland native Head, who was leading the team in scoring (16.5 average) and who saved Illinois with 25 points in its closest call, a 73–68 overtime win against Iowa on Jan. 20. "It's good to learn that we can pull games out when we aren't playing our best," says Head, a.k.a. 4-Head (read the back of his jersey), a onetime devotee of the dunk who raised his three-point shooting accuracy from 34.3% in 2003–04 to 43.4% this season. "We have so much trust in each other that if we pass to the open guy, we *know* he'll knock the shot down," Head adds. "And the people taking the shots have confidence too."

Perhaps owing to their transcendent backcourt, the Illini's most overlooked improvements have taken place inside. "Our downfall last year was obvious," says Weber. "Teams just said, 'We're going inside, and you can't stop us.' So this season that was the Number 1 thing to address." A colorful quartet of forwards has shored up that weakness, including starters James Augustine, an indefatigable rebounder, and Roger Powell Jr., a 6' 6" battler who's a licensed Pentecostal minister. The reserves are offensive glass specialist Jack (the Professor) Ingram, an Academic All–Big Ten electrical engineering major, and Smith, a 7' 2" perimeter drifter with a vaguely sinister nickname (Chainsaw) who unspools such gems as, "I like to think I'm kind of bipolar."

Mental states aside, the Illini interior has been good enough to win, if not necessarily to dominate. "The key is, all four guys are different," Weber says. "James is a runner who's athletic and has great bounce. Roger's undersized, but he's explosive and quick. Nick's got the skills of a European-

HEAD'S UP Once a drive-and-dunk man, Head has become a deadly long-range shooter—and the team's leading scorer.

JOHN BIEVER (2)

Rare Ratio

IN THE FOUR YEARS since the NCAA began officially tracking turnovers, the highest assist-to-turnover ratio for a season has been 1.57 (Troy State, 2003–04). Through Sunday, Illinois, with deft ball handlers like Dee Brown *(above)*, was on pace to far exceed that mark.

TEAM	2004–05 RATIO
ILLINOIS	1.80
TEXAS TECH	1.50
WEST VIRGINIA	1.42
AIR FORCE	1.41
VERMONT	1.40
OLD DOMINION	1.35
BOSTON COLLEGE	1.33
WASHINGTON	1.32
UTAH STATE	1.32
NORTHERN IOWA	1.29

SOURCE: NCAA

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type big man, and Jack is a rugged in-between guy who can rebound and shoot from 15 to 17 feet."

With the success the 48-year-old Weber has enjoyed in Champaign, and in five previous years at Southern Illinois (including a round-of-16 run in the 2002 NCAA tournament), it's hard to fathom why he was bypassed for head jobs all over the Midwest during 18 years as Gene Keady's assistant at Purdue. Oh, there were interviews, lots of them: Akron, Central Michigan, Drake, Miami (Ohio) and Toledo, even Southeast Missouri State. But never an offer. "I tried to help him get a lot of jobs, but no one was ever smart enough to hire him," says Keady, who finally helped persuade Southern Illinois athletic director Jim Hart (the former NFL quarterback) to tap Weber for the Salukis' rebuilding project in 1998.

Nothing, however, prepared Weber for the resistance he faced at Illinois after replacing Kansas-bound Bill Self in May 2003. "There were a lot of rocky spots those first six months," he says. The players balked at his preseason conditioning workouts, which lasted three times as long as Self's had. Nor did they cotton to Weber's sometimes disarming candor. "Dee was the hardest one to get to buy in," the coach says. "The first week I got here, we had workouts to evaluate the players, and right away I said, 'Dee, your left hand is suspect, and you don't have a pull-up jumper.' I was trying to help him, but he was thinking, Who is this guy?"

Tired of hearing Self's name's come up among his players and in the media, Weber took drastic measures a month into last season, famously donning a black suit and tie and holding a mock funeral for Self in the locker room. "A lot of people thought it was great, and some thought it was nuts," Weber says. "I don't know how Bill took it, but it was really a compliment to him. I had to get it in their minds that he wasn't coming back." Yet the ghost of Self wasn't Weber's only obstacle. An early blowout loss to Providence occasioned the customary Internet and talk-radio hysteria among Illini fans, and when Weber's daughter Christy woke him up screaming one morning before the Missouri game, he assumed the worst.

"She starts yelling, 'Dad, there's something hanging in the tree outside!' " recalls Weber, whose thoughts raced to the legendary Dean Smith effigy that angry North Carolina fans hung early in Smith's career at Chapel Hill. "I'm thinking, Oh, God, they've gone too far. They want us out of town." When he finally approached the tree, Weber instead discovered a stuffed feline above a message reading BEAT THE TIGERS/COACH WE LOVE YOU.

Illinois rebounded to defeat Mizzou, win its first outright Big Ten title since 1952 and reach the round of 16, falling to Duke. These days, the delightfully overcaffeinated Orange Krush student section serenades Weber with a lusty "Brooooooce" when he's introduced at Assembly Hall—apt reward for a dues-paying grinder who

JOHN BIEVER

A Fashionable Style of Play

The three-guard attack used by Illinois can be devastating—and risky

WITH ITS BLISTERING backcourt troika of Deron Williams, Dee Brown and Luther Head, Illinois is the latest team to run rampant using a three-guard lineup. The Illini are advancing the trend of perimeter-overloaded play that began in 1993–94. That season Arizona coach Lute Olson switched his offensive focus from immobile big men—the twin towers of Sean Rooks and Ed Stokes—to his three hyperkinetic guards, Damon Stoudamire, Khalid Reeves and Reggie Geary. "It was pretty revolutionary at the time," says longtime Wildcats assistant Jim Rosborough. "Other coaches were calling and wanting to know what we were doing."

Arizona reached the Final Four that season, and by the time the Wildcats won the 1997 national title (with starting guards Mike Bibby, Miles Simon and Michael Dickerson), Olson's innovation had sparked a full-blown movement. Because there are relatively few true big men, coaches have compensated with speed—which means that three-guard sets have become commonplace. Last season Alabama and Saint Joseph's made the NCAA tournament's Elite Eight by relying heavily on *four*-guard attacks. In its second-round game the Crimson Tide upset No. 1 Stanford even though it was outrebounded 49–29.

As that statistic suggests, the three-guard approach has its drawbacks. The expression "matchup nightmare" is usually used to describe tall small forwards—think 6′ 7″ Joey Graham of Oklahoma State or 6′ 7″ Francisco García of Louisville—who can maximize their height advantage and athleticism against shorter third guards. And when a guard-oriented team grows cold from the outside, it often spells doom: In the 2004 tournament Saint Joseph's was 8 for 26 from beyond the arc in its loss to bigger Oklahoma State.

Guard play remains the key in March, and few teams can hope to outperform the Illini's terrific trio at tournament time. That's what they'll have to do, though, to knock off the No. 1 team. When asked how to beat his Illini, center Nick (Chainsaw) Smith replied, "I would do one of two things. One, play zone and pray that we miss our shots and you outrebound us. Or two, slow us down in transition and hope your three guards have the night of their lives." The rest almost went without saying, but Smith said it anyway: "Not many teams can do that." —G.W.

MISMATCH The 6′ 3″ Williams flies by most guards but can suffer when pitted against a tall small forward.

A Game of Three-Coach Monte

NO SCENARIO for the Final Four in St. Louis would be more delicious than one that includes this week's three highest-ranked teams, Illinois (No. 1), North Carolina (No. 2) and Kansas (No. 3). Two years ago these storied programs were partnered in a frantic hiring dance that began with the resignation of Tar Heels coach Matt Doherty. When the music stopped, Roy Williams had forsaken Kansas for his alma mater, North Carolina; Bill Self had left Illinois for Kansas; and Bruce Weber had moved from Southern Illinois to fill the vacancy at Champaign. Here's a rundown of some of the major and not-so-major developments that have occurred at the three schools since then.

COACH	NEW PLAYING STYLE	PROGRAM FACE-LIFT	TURNING POINT	*HOOSIERS* MOMENT	CHEESEBALL GIMMICK	MEMORABLE QUOTE	CONVERTED SKEPTIC
WILLIAMS	Sped up Doherty's secondary break and buckled down the defense	Ordered new videoboards in the Smith Center for next season	Season-opening 77–66 loss to Santa Clara; at week's end Heels were 17–1 since	Heckler at 2003 Kansas banquet yells, "Traitor!" only to be shouted down by center Nick Collison's father, Dave	Skit-filled "Late Night with Roy" Midnight Madness included sophomore guard Wes Miller impersonating Williams	"I could give a s--- about Carolina right now." (April 7, 2003, after Kansas's loss in NCAA title game to Syracuse)	Rashad McCants
WEBER	Replaced Self's high-low offense and occasional zone defense with "pure motion" and strict man-to-man	Made orange the dominant uniform color	51–49 win at Indiana on Feb. 3, 2004; Illini were 34–2 since	In December 2003, discovers "effigy" hanging in front yard that turns out to be toy Missouri Tiger with message of support from Illinois students	Dons chef's hat for "Grilling with Weber" cooking spot on his weekly TV show	"This is the funeral of Bill Self. He is no longer the coach here." (Dec. 11, 2003, at pregame meeting to win team over)	Dee Brown
SELF	Shed Williams's secondary break and installed high-low attack	Brought back red jerseys after 17 years in mothballs	79–58 win over Oklahoma last Feb. 29; Jayhawks were 23–3 since	More than 100 Orange Krush student fans at 2003 Illinois banquet wear T-shirts that say I LOVE MY SELF and DON'T GO BILL! (Self leaves six days later)	Brings doughnuts and pizza to student campers before games at Allen Fieldhouse	"The first thing I did was to check my pulse to make sure I was alive." (Dec. 15, 2003, responding to Weber's "funeral" oration)	Keith Langford

MANNY MILLAN (WILLIAMS AND MCCANTS); JOHN BIEVER (WEBER AND BROWN); BOB ROSATO (SELF); GREG NELSON (LANGFORD)

grew up as one of five children in working-class Milwaukee and took the advice of his late father, Louis, to become a coach. "Even though Coach Weber got the big contract [$550,000 a season through 2008–09], he's still a regular dude who helps carry bags off the bus," says Brown, who embraced his new coach's approach midway through last season. Adds Illini assistant Jay Price of Weber, "He's a basketball junkie. At night he'll go home, have dinner with his family [wife Megan and daughters Hannah, Christy and Emily] and start watching tape. I'll check my cellphone and have a missed call from him at 12:37 in the morning."

Like the soon-to-retire Keady, Weber preaches man-to-man defense—the Illini often played zone under Self—but he has tweaked Keady's motion offense, creating "changes that are more suited to the modern-day player," as Keady says, with a hint of old-lion resignation. "There are more options, from allowing the guards to post up to giving players more freedom to shoot threes and go one-on-one. But they still get the ball inside and make the extra pass."

"The more skilled players you have, the more freedom you can give them," says Weber. "They're allowed to make plays as long as they do it within the system."

Despite the positive publicity surrounding the Illini's breakout season, the jury's still out on Weber as a big-time recruiter: All of the players in his rotation are Self's recruits, and Self outflanked him last fall to land highly regarded in-state forward Julian Wright of Homewood-Flossmoor High. That's just one of many reasons that Weber would no doubt love to meet (and beat) Self's Jayhawks at, say, the Final Four in April. ("That would be a hard game," Weber says diplomatically. "I think the guys would want to beat him, but Bill's also their friend.") But as any Illinois fan should know, it wouldn't be smart to look ahead two months, whether the topic is a possible three-weekend bus tour to Illinois-friendly NCAA tournament sites (Indianapolis-Chicago-St. Louis) or the chance to become the first men's college team in 29 years to go unbeaten.

Even the Illinois players were divided on the topic of achieving a perfect season. "I don't think it's impossible," declared Williams.

"Anything can happen," said Brown.

Smith had other ideas, mindful that Stanford and Saint Joseph's failed to reach last year's Final Four after taking spotless records into March. "The bottom line is, we're not going to win every game," Big Nick argued. "We're not the 1976 Indiana team or the 1991 UNLV team by any means. Those teams had, like, five NBA guys each. We have very good talent and play well together, but going undefeated just isn't going to happen. Besides, if you were in our position, would you want to go into the NCAA tournament without a loss? Talk about a zoo. Everyone remembers how you finish, anyway, not how you played in January."

You can always count on Chainsaw to cut through the hype. He's probably right, of course, but at least he and the rest of the Stylin' Illini know what matters. Perfection may be the goal, but they can still make history without it. □

HOW WOULD YOU DO ON THE INSIDE?

YOU RETURN TO YOUR CELL AND CATCH YOUR CELLMATE IN THE MIDDLE OF A HEROIN DEAL. YOU:

- OFFER TO KEEP QUIET FOR A PIECE OF THE ACTION.
  - YOUR CELLMATE RELUCTANTLY AGREES AND OFFERS YOU A HIT. YOU:
    - DECLINE. → YOU BECOME A SUCCESSFUL DEALER, CUTTING INTO YOUR PARTNER'S PROFITS.
    - ACCEPT. → ANGRY, HE SNITCHES TO THE WARDEN.
      - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.
- OFFER TO KEEP QUIET FOR A HIT.
  - THE TEMPORARY ESCAPE IS FANTASTIC. YOU BECOME A REGULAR USER AND QUICKLY GO HEAVILY INTO DEBT. TO PAY, YOU:
    - START SELLING YOUR BODY. → YOU PROPOSITION THE WRONG GUY. HE ATTACKS YOU. YOU STAB HIM.
      - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.
    - TRY TO ROB A WEAKER PRISONER. → THE GUARDS CATCH YOU IN THE ACT.
      - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.
- SNITCH TO A GUARD.
  - THE GUARD IS BEING BRIBED BY THE HEROIN DEALERS. HE TELLS THEM YOU ARE SNITCHING. YOU:
    - TRY TO GO IT ALONE. → ONE OF THE DEALERS TRIES TO KILL YOU IN THE CAFETERIA. YOU STAB HIM.
      - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.
    - GO BACK TO THE WARDEN FOR PROTECTION. → THE ONLY WAY TO PROTECT YOU IS TO TAKE YOU OUT OF POPULATION.
      - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.
- GO TO THE WARDEN.
  - THE WARDEN THANKS YOU AND ASSIGNS A GUARD TO PROTECT YOU.
    - → YOU GET THROWN IN THE HOLE.

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GRIEF RELIEF Williams said that her success in Melbourne was a triumph over a terrible family loss.

Digging Down Deep

Serena Williams and **Marat Safin** gave gut-check performances to win the Australian Open and make it clear that they intend to return to the top of the game

BY L. JON WERTHEIM

Photographs by David Callow

SHE HAD them all fooled. Whenever Serena Williams was away from the tennis firmament in recent months—when she was backstage at a fashion show, on the set of a Will Smith–produced TV program, at P. Diddy's New Year's Eve dinner—folks assumed that she was still her sport's reigning monarch, still winning Grand Slam titles in bulk. She smiled and nodded and played along. "I never corrected them in any way," she says. ¶ She never bothered explaining that, in fact, she hadn't won a major title since Wimbledon in 2003. She kept mum about her eviction from the Top 5, about her dimming aura among her colleagues, about the army of Russians that had displaced her as the dominant force in women's tennis. And she certainly didn't explain *why*: That apart from a string of injuries and from surgery on her left knee, she was struggling with profound feelings of loss after her oldest sister, Yetunde Price, was fatally shot on a street in Compton, Calif., in September 2003. "To be in the situation I've been placed in for a little over a year," she said last week, "it's not easy to come out and perform your best."

So the Australian Open championship that Williams won last Saturday, after beating three of the four top seeds, may have been the most meaningful title of her colorful career. Beyond effectively reclaiming the top spot in her sport and adding to her haul of Grand Slam singles trophies (now seven), winning her first major since Yetunde's death was a big step in her grief therapy. "Remember, Serena was 21 when this happened—21 years old and her life was changed forever," says Isha Price, the second oldest of the five Price and Williams sisters. "Like all of us, she's been going through her [mourning] process in her own way. This win will really help."

If time has blunted some of the pain, reminders of the tragedy are abundant. Serena watches as her sister Venus struggles with her tennis, knowing that the ultimate reason is not a shaky second serve and a recalcitrant forehand. It runs much deeper. "Venus took the death of our sister really, really hard," says Isha, an attorney in Washington, D.C. "She has some emotional things she needs to work out." Serena looks on in awe as her mother, Oracene Price, raises the daughter and two sons, none older than 13, whom Yetunde left behind. And when Serena is on the court, she hears her relatives yelling, "Come on, Meeka," the nickname Yetunde gave her as a kid.

"I guess I want people to understand that our family is so important [to us] and that a loss like that was devastating," Serena says. "So to come back and win is so key."

Her triumph had other consequences as well. It issued a sharp rejoinder to critics in the tennis salon who have long carped about her on-again, off-again commitment to the sport. "Serena cannot be a champion again without being fully dedicated," one Australian television commentator mistakenly put it last week. "That's just conventional wisdom." (News flash: Any player who wears lime-green knee-high spats onto the

COUNTERPUNCH After losing the first set of the semis to the hard-hitting Sharapova, Williams pumped herself up and won a thriller.

court for warmups doesn't give a damn about conventional anything.) Williams also sent a strong message to the rest of the field. She may be ranked only No. 2 as of Monday—up five places from before the Open—but she is, unmistakably, once again the brightest star in the women's tennis cosmos.

In Melbourne, Williams looked, for better and worse, every bit like the player who completed the Serena Slam two years ago, winning the French Open, Wimbledon, the U.S. Open and the Australian in succession but not in one calendar year. Her game is still mottled with unforced errors, and her fitness level remains, shall we say, suboptimal. But her basic strategy—pound the ball as if it owes you money, and fight like hell—remains devastatingly effective. In the semifinals she was down match point three times to her new rival, Maria Sharapova, the self-enchanted Russian. Each time, Williams gritted her teeth and delivered the necessary shots, and she prevailed 2–6, 7–5, 8–6.

In the final Williams fell behind 1–4, took a long injury break for a mysterious back problem—described by the trainer as a "rib dysfunction"—and then, after losing the set 2–6, won 12 of the next 15 games from a shockingly listless Lindsay Davenport. When Williams brags, "I'm still the top fighter out there," it doesn't spark much debate.

Marat Safin, on the other hand, had rarely betrayed a taste for combat before he won the men's final on Sunday. The 6' 4" Russian had always been an enigma, if a charming one: a monstrously talented player with a history of erratic results and mentally vacant performances. He won the 2000 U.S. Open at age 20, overpowering Pete Sampras in the final, but in the ensuing four years he didn't win another major title. He was the youngest player ever to reach the top ranking, in November 2000, yet at the start of 2004 he was perilously close to falling out of the top 100. "It's all in his head," said Mats Wilander, a three-time winner in Melbourne and one of Safin's many former coaches, before the men's final. "It's not like a bad second serve you can fix on the practice court."

By all outward appearances Safin relished his role as the sport's literal court jester. At last year's French Open he pulled down his pants to exult after winning a point. He was a favorite in the pressroom, where he could be witty and self-deprecating in four languages. His propensity for smashing rackets became a running joke. But in truth, he despaired. "Once you have bad losses, people speak and you listen," Safin says. "You start to believe that maybe it's who you are: *You can lose to anybody, you can beat anybody, but that's it.* After a while you don't believe you're good enough."

Safin had always been an enigma, if a charming one: a **MONSTROUSLY TALENTED** player with a history of erratic results and mentally vacant performances.

There was no transforming event, no single moment of reckoning for Safin. Still, he arrived in Melbourne a changed man, projecting an air of seriousness and studied calm. His antics in matches were few, and his press conferences were fairly colorless. Most of the rackets in his quiver remained unbroken. "I needed to pass through to a new stage," says Safin, who turned 25 last week. "I'm calmer than I used to be. I guess I was tired of making the same mistakes."

SUNDAY DRIVER Safin's powerful ground strokes and newfound mental toughness wore down Hewitt in the title match.

This new maturity was increasingly manifest as the tournament progressed. The men's draw produced breathtaking matches, none more so than Safin's semifinal dethroning of King Roger I. In his former life Safin would have folded like a chaise longue in a tight match against Roger Federer, the best player in the world. But in his current incarnation the Russian summoned his best tennis at the crucial moments, staving off a match point, firing ground strokes with merciless precision and winning a classic, 5–7, 6–4, 5–7, 7–6, 9–7. Beating Federer in the fifth set at a Grand Slam is tennis's equivalent to staring down Tiger Woods, circa 2000, in a one-hole playoff. But afterward, in an on-court interview with Jim Courier, Safin was so somber that Courier asked, "Do you need a hug, or what?"

Safin was no less businesslike in the final, thwarting Lleyton Hewitt's quest to become the first homegrown Australian Open men's champion since 1976. After losing a nerve-addled first set, Safin offered a tasting menu of shots that were downright Federerian in their virtuosity. The highlight was a running forehand winner that drew a standing ovation from the pro-Hewitt crowd. (Reporter's note: *f/h dead run zing—r u joking?*) When it came time to serve out the match against Hewitt, the game's most pugnacious opponent, Safin held at love—a fitting coda to two weeks of poised tennis.

Even after winning the big-ticket title that had been so long in coming, Safin didn't lapse into his former ways. There would be no leap into the stands. His valedictory to the crowd was filled with thoughtful, insightful remarks; the customary Safinisms and one-liners were scarce. And he had no plans to lay siege to Melbourne's nightclubs. "I'm getting too old for this," he said. "I need to take it easy."

Williams was similarly subdued in victory, all too aware that there are matters more important than the outcome of a tennis match. As she accepted congratulatory calls and read her e-mail following Saturday's final, there was a conspicuous absence on her caller I.D. and her Buddy List. Still, Yetunde had been riding tandem with her throughout the tournament. "My sister is here in spirit," Serena said, brushing a tear out of her left eye. "I wanted to win this for her. But I wanted to win this for me too."

Before repairing to her hotel, she posed with the trophy, sitting on the bow of a water taxi docked in the Yarra River. Photographers snapped away and passersby cheered and other boats honked. Then the water taxi left the shore and off Serena went, smiling as she left everyone in her wake. □

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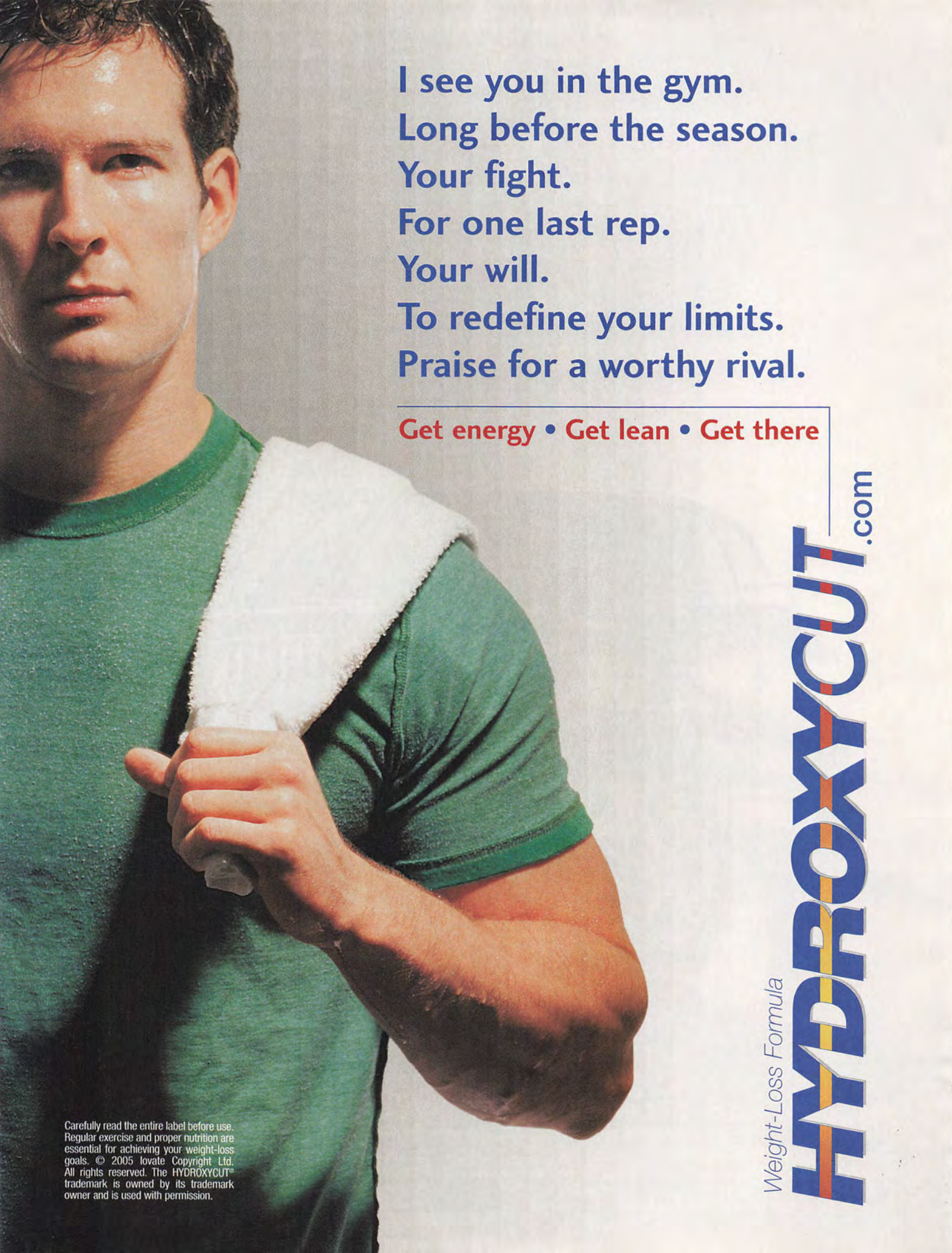
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Sports Illustrated

Finding The Perfect SPORTS BAR

You can't watch the Super Bowl just anywhere. So SI went in search of the best sports watering holes in the land. The trip took us back to the joints of the past and gave us a glimpse of the bars of the future, with a lot of long, grueling research in between. Hey, somebody's got to do it

BY CHRIS BALLARD

Illustration by Mirko Ilic

Where Will You Watch The Super Bowl?

PUB PIONEER Toots Shor's was one of the first to mix sports with a bar by encouraging New York athletes to hang out there.

LEE LOCKWOOD

THERE WAS a time long ago, in the years B.D.—Before Dish—when a parched fan would have been thrilled to happen upon a bar with a pair of televisions that showed two different games simultaneously. *We got your Cubs game on this TV, and we got your White Sox game over there. Ya want a Bud or Miller?* Hallelujah, our man might have thought, for I have found the sports fan's paradise.

Oh, how it all has changed. Today there exist multistory Shangri-las of sport, cavernous, cacophonous places that hum with televisions of all kind: plasma TVs and high-def TVs and flat-screen TVs and miniature personal TVs and giant projection TVs and even TVs in the bathroom so that one can drain one's bladder while watching Ray Allen drain three-pointers. To watch a game at one of these sports theme parks is to have, in the words of John Pierce, who oversees the marketing of the ESPN Zones for Disney Regional Entertainment, "an immersive sports dining experience."

On a recent NFL playoff Saturday at the Baltimore ESPN Zone, the flagship location which opened in 1998 and serves a half million customers a year, fans were gathered at tables and booths and in big cushy recliners—Recliners! At a freakin' bar!—staring up at a curved 16-foot-by-13-foot screen like so many teenagers parked at a drive-in. They drank beer from gargantuan mugs, they smoked cigarettes, and they shoved great handfuls of seasoned french fries into their mouths, sometimes all simultaneously. They wore jerseys with their own names sewn on the back, they told their kids to *be quiet because the Jets are driving and Daddy doesn't talk when the Jets have the ball*, and they chose from one of a dozen feeds on their table-mounted monitors, adjusting the surround sound until it seemed as if Al Michaels were sitting close enough to snag the last chicken finger.

If that weren't enough stimulation, one flight up, 10,000 square feet of sports video games buzzed and blinked. Rifle a pass at a simulated receiver! Boot a soccer ball at a simulated goal! Ride down simulated rapids! And everywhere one looked, as if trapped in some Kubrick-ian fantasy, there were flashing images: the Nets versus Orlando on one feed, arm wrestling on another, Old Dominion playing James Madison on a third. It is all synced too; the Zone has more than 150 monitors, all managed from a control station that looks like the flight deck of the Death Star. Unquestionably, the place is a marvel of technology and a testament to the twin American ideals of branding and bigness. But is it really a sports bar?

Is this what sports bars are about: roving packs of tourists, de facto day care and an in-house gift shop, all in a space so large and amorphous that at any given time it takes 200 employees (there's a reason they wear name tags) to run the place? Can it be a sports bar when there's such a bewildering array of visual and aural experiences that spontaneous conversation is all but impossible? In sum, can a sports bar be a place where nobody knows your name and, what's more, likely never will?

To answer that question one must first define what a sports bar is, and that's not easy. Just about every joint that serves alcohol in this age of cable and DirecTV can call itself a "sports bar," considering that you'd be hard-pressed to find someplace that *wasn't* showing the big game. But to distinguish a real sports bar from a bar that happens to show sports, one must first understand the evolution of the concept. So pull up a stool, order another round and listen up, for there's a tale to tell.

ON THE beginning, there was no game on. Sure, people talked about the game, as people have always done, as no doubt Romans did in some marble room, remarking upon which gladiator had done well against that day's lion. But it was all ex post facto; there was no way to follow it live. Not that people didn't try. In the early days of baseball, bar owners on the East Coast would have a boy run down to the telegraph office, from whence he'd return, out of breath, to report that the Red Sox had scored two in the seventh to take a one-run lead. Fifteen minutes later he'd be sent off again, thus creating the world's first rudimentary sports ticker.

With the advent of radio, people could at least listen to the game. Still, most sports highlights came by word of mouth or in the next morning's newspaper. Or in the form of lushly illustrated posters, created as advertising by the major leagues and their p.r. companies. These ads were nailed to the walls of bars and boasted of fantastic feats. BARTELL OF GIANTS ROBS DIMAGGIO OF HIT read one from Oct. 11, 1937.

Around this time, however, a restaurant in New York City was taking it one step further: It was bringing in DiMaggio himself, who, if you were lucky, might tell you over a beer exactly how he was robbed of that hit. The bar, located smack in the middle of Manhattan, at 51 West 51st Street, was called Toots Shor's and it was owned by the barrel-bellied, boisterous Bernard (Toots) Shor. There were three baseball teams in New York at the time—the Yankees, Dodgers and Giants—and Shor made certain that as many of the players, sportswriters and executives as possible spent their downtime in his bar. It wasn't just a place for sports figures either; on any given evening Jackie Gleason, Frank Sinatra and any manner of politician, Broadway star or entertainer might swagger through the doors. Yogi Berra, the Yankees' catcher, was said to have met Ernest Hemingway at Shor's one night, and when the author was introduced as "an important writer," Berra replied, "What paper you with, Ernie?"

Shor's closed in 1971, and Shor died six years later, but his vision inspired a new breed of bar. In the '60s and '70s steak houses and dive bars across the country began to take on a more sports-driven personality. Places like the Pink Pony in Scottsdale, Ariz. (spring training home to the likes of Harry Caray, Leo Durocher and Billy Martin), Ricky's in San Leandro, Calif., and the Eliot Lounge in Boston *(page 76)* became the equivalent of locker rooms away from the locker room.

But New York City was the mecca. In 1965 Yankees utility infielder Phil Linz opened a bar called Mr. Laffs (his nickname) in midtown Manhattan. It became the postgame destination for Knicks and Rangers and all those who basked in their reflected glory. The bar's heyday soon passed, but as it happened, one of the bartenders at Mr. Laffs was a young, exuberant Yankees fan named Joe Healey. His father, a congressman from the Bronx, had taken him to Toots Shor's as a boy, and Joe remembered what it was like to sit starry-eyed amid the players and the beat writers. So in the mid-'70s, together with his friend Jim Costello, he set out to create the same kind of atmosphere at a new bar. They decided to call the place Runyon's, in honor of the legendary sportswriter and author Damon Runyon. On April 1, 1977, they opened the doors on 50th Street and Second Avenue to what many consider to be the greatest sports bar ever.

It was not much to look at, a cramped subterranean establishment, a few steps down from the street. Two green box seats from Yankee Stadium stood like iron sentries on the terrace outside, and inside it was dark and homey.

There were two TVs tuned to games, and patrons certainly watched, but the place was really about conversation. There was, at all times, a *Baseball Encyclopedia* within easy reach, and nary a night went by that it wasn't consulted to settle an argument. To hit the spot at "high tide," as Healey called it, was like walking in on *PTI: The Early Years*. In one corner there was the *Boston Globe*'s Bob Ryan arguing with Gene Orza, the lawyer for the baseball players' union, about the DH rule, and over there Mike Lupica, the *Daily News* columnist, and maybe John Walsh, who would go on to become the creative force behind ESPN, and always Kevin O'Malley, CBS's college hoops honcho, and *Newsweek* writer Pete Axthelm, a cigar in one hand and a cognac in the other. In the back room you might see Beano Cook and Mike Francesca and Bob Costas, not to mention various future SI staffers. There would also be any number of athletes, from Lawrence Taylor to Doug Flutie. And all of them talking sports. "There was a skill in those days to knowing exactly what the ball and strike count was, answering the trivia question someone had just asked, ordering another drink and getting another cheeseburger," says Lupica. "It was kind of the Runyon's decathlon. If you couldn't do that, you had to go to a wine bar or something."

TALK THE TALK Healey (with Tim McCarver and Bob Gibson in 1985) ran a saloon where smart sports conversation was prized above all.

"Runyon's had a literary feel," says Costas. "It had this combination of shared experience and memory and humor and absurdity, the way reasonable people view sports."

The crowds came in waves: first the Wall Street guys and the locals, then the writers and the regulars and, eventually, the players and the umpires. This meant you could find yourself, after watching the Yankees or the Mets game, arguing calls with the guys who made them—umps like Bruce Froemming and Richie Garcia, who stayed at a hotel around the corner. "It didn't have an Internet sports geek feel to it; it had more of a literary feel," says Costas, who lived nearby. "It had this combination of memory and shared experience and humor and irony and absurdity. The whole mix was the way reasonable people view sports, as a nice little corner of

COURTESY OF JOE HEALEY

their lives and a place they can come back to for a shared sense of reassurance, but not a place where sports are the only thing that mattered and you become some kind of crazy zealot."

Like any great bar, it had great bartenders, guys like Richie O'Rourke and John (Shirts) Hughes. Healey loves to tell a story about one of the finest, a caustic Irish chap named Doc Mannion. "On the opening night of the Summer Olympics in 1980, we had three out-of-town guys in three-piece suits sit down right in the middle of the bar. We had the Mets and Yankees on the TVs. One of them says to Doc, 'Hey, mind if we watch the opening ceremonies?'

"Doc took one look at him and said, 'We don't watch parades. Not unless they start putting lines on them.' "

At the center of it all was Healey, a Runyonesque character if ever there was one. Robust and lively, with a thicket of black hair and a relentless smile, he'd greet everyone when they came in, and as the night progressed along with his whiskey consumption, he'd grow increasingly hopeful about the chances of his beloved Yankees.

"Joe was one of these guys who didn't just have an interest and a knowledge in sports but a kid's rooting interest," says Costas. "In its own way it was kind of sweet. It didn't have the angry edge that a lot of modern rooting seems to have."

Runyon's was a place where strangers became friends and, since everybody walked home or took a cab, everyone drank. The ethos of the bar was nicely summed up in a manifesto of sorts, written by then SI writer Dan Jenkins. It was called "Runyon's Stages of Drunkenness," and it read as follows:

1. witty and charming
2. rich and powerful
3. philosophical
4. against the designated hitter
5. f--- dinner
6. witty and charming, part II

THE 25 BEST IN AMERICA

SO MANY BARS, so little time before last call. And yet, undaunted, SI's (Pabst) blue-ribbon panel set about the task of determining the best sports bars in America. First, we convened a nationwide nominating committee of some 100 staffers, correspondents and certifiably reliable bar aficionados to begin the process. ¶ Some suggested places were eliminated early because they failed to meet our definition of sports bar: a place that first and foremost caters to sports fans. Other joints made the first cut by virtue of how often, and how passionately, they were nominated. Then the panel went to work. Where any doubt existed, a panelist was dispatched to check the place out and render a decision. ¶ Given the nature of the subject, this list surely won't go unchallenged, and if a worthy watering hole has somehow been overlooked it is a certainty that you, the sporting barflies of America, will let us know. And if your case is convincing? Well, maybe we'll have another round.

KEY TO SYMBOLS Number of TV screens | Cable and satellite packages | Number of draft beers | Number of bottled beers

7. for the designated hitter
8. morose and despondent
9. invisible
10. bulletproof

Meanwhile, just as Runyon's was hitting its early stride, a man in Washington, D.C., named Mike O'Harro was taking note of the country's growing obsession with sports. By this time O'Harro was already a Hall of Famer in the bar business. He'd gotten his start in 1963, when he arrived in D.C. as a young Naval officer just returning from a year in Japan. With the aim of meeting women, he began giving parties for the Junior Officer's Professionals Association. His mixers were so successful that in the mid-'60s, along with his good friend Jim Desmond, he opened what is now considered the country's first singles bar, Gentleman's II. Then with singles bars on the wane in the early 1970s, he and Desmond opened one of America's first disco bars in '75, an elite place in Washington called Tramp's, which attracted big names and turned big profits. Stallone came, Cher showed up in army fatigues, and the bar was so successful that *Us* magazine dubbed O'Harro "the dean of discos."

When disco gave way to pop in the '80s, O'Harro started looking for his next theme and realized, in his words, "two things are important to Americans: love of God and love of sports." He called up Desmond, rounded up funds and spent $1 million to renovate a 2,400-square-foot building in a run-down space at the back of a forbidding 150-foot alley in Georgetown. Now he just needed a name. He remembered a bar he'd been to in Amsterdam—he still has the matchbook from it—that had as its logo a drawing of an old-time baseball team and a simple yet catchy title: Champions.

Touted in the invitation for its opening as "an innovative new bar-restaurant" that takes sports "from the dugout of the corner bar to uptown chic," Champions opened on Sept. 28, 1983, with the sort of fanfare that these days accompanies only movie premieres.

1 The Fours, *Boston*

THOUGH SOME swear by the Cask 'n Flagon, this is the choice of Boston insiders, from sportswriters to assistant coaches all the way up to team owners. By virtue of the Red Sox' miracle season in 2004 and the Patriots' second straight Super Bowl appearance, The Fours finds itself at the white-hot center of the sports universe. Tim Colton purchased the place in 1980, when it was little more than a 30-foot bar with stools, and it soon became a hockey hangout favored by Bruins legend Ray Bourque, who would come by with his teammates after games. (Back then members of the Canadiens and the Penguins would often come in for lunch since the bar was right across the street from the old Garden.) Today the bar has evolved into a two-story sports mecca, with more than 200 pieces of Boston sports paraphernalia on its walls. Center stage is a tribute to the holy trinity of the last great Celtics teams: game-worn jerseys of Larry Bird, Robert Parish and Kevin McHale. Parish's white singlet strikes a discordant note, though, with Bird's and McHale's green jerseys. "His original one got stolen," says Peter Colton, who joined his brother in the business in '89. "One night Parish's agent came in, and when we told him what happened, he had Robert sign a jersey and send it over, but he sent a white one."

ILLUSTRATIONS: BOB ECKSTEIN; STEPHEN WILKES

16 | 22 | 30

For more tips and touts on the nation's best sports bars, go to SI.com/**sportsbars**.

Sugar Ray Leonard was there, Brooks Robinson was there, and so were Joe Theismann and the Washington Redskins cheerleaders. The place was packed and the crowd extended into the alley, as it often would over the years. Surely few revelers noticed on that first night, but the bar had what was then a rather unusual feature: sports memorabilia, all of which had been painstakingly arranged by O'Harro, an inveterate collector. It covered every inch of wall space, and even the bar top contained a small fortune of baseball cards encased in resin. There were only "two or four TVs," as best as O'Harro can remember, but that wasn't what it was about; Champions aspired to be something totally different from Runyon's. "We didn't want just a bastion for guys to talk about high school football," says O'Harro. "We wanted a place where women felt comfortable." So there was dancing and deejays, and *Playboy* even named it one of the top singles bars in 1984, describing it in memorable prose as "high energy, hot and hetero." For his part, O'Harro, who has a slick, salesman's charm, became one of D.C.'s most famous bachelors. (At his home, which doubles as something of a Champions shrine and '70s time capsule, complete with zebra skin and polar bear rugs, there is a framed 1977 *National Enquirer* story naming him one of the country's 10 most eligible bachelors.)

Soon Champions was the largest grossing liquor bar per square foot in the country. Still, it might have been just another trendy nightspot if it weren't for the events. While Desmond loved nothing more than to tend bar and b.s. with his customers, O'Harro had a Trump-ian ability to create buzz and was never content unless the bar was jammed. ("I'd go hide in the bathroom if the place wasn't packed," he says.) So he sponsored anything and everything, no matter how obscure: Redskins nights, movie opening parties, the USFL Cheerleaders Kickoff Party, the Georgetown women's tennis team party, a Miss Hawaiian Tropic contest and even the U.S. Boomerang Association party. When all the NFL quarterbacks were in town for

2 Ricky's

San Leandro, Calif.

DURING THE Oakland Raiders' 13 years of exile in Los Angeles, from 1982 to '95, Ricky's was the Penelope of sports bars. "We kept the torches burning," says owner Ricky Ricardo Jr. "All those years we never missed one Raiders game. One time there was a game on Ku Band, and we couldn't get the frequency, so we rented a dish for $1,000 to pick it up." When Oakland beat Minnesota in Super Bowl XI in 1977, the bar recorded the game on three-quarter-inch tape and replayed it three times a day for several weeks; one afternoon a bunch of Raiders players even came in to watch.

80 | 10 | 40

3 Nemo's

Detroit

WHEN THIS Detroit standard-bearer opened in 1965, it was across the street from Tiger Stadium, near the Lions' offices and only minutes from Joe Louis Arena, where the Red Wings play. Only the Red Wings are still nearby, but the bar thrives. When the Tigers migrated to Comerica Park in 2000, Nemo's bridged the distance by buying some old school buses to ferry patrons to games and bring them back for a postgame quaff. The bar's loyalty to the Red Wings has also paid off: It was the first place owner Mike Ilitch brought the Stanley Cup when Detroit won in 1997.

12 | 10 | 21

4 Major Goolsby's

Milwaukee

A CITY institution since 1970 and once tabbed "Milwaukee's mother of all sports bars" by the hometown *Journal Sentinel*, Goolsby's is a major hangout for Bucks and Marquette hoop fans, thanks to its location a block away from the Bradley Center. Ticket holders crowd the place after games for the two-drafts-for-the-price-of-one deal. Like any place where athletes and booze mix, Major Goolsby's has had its memorable encounters, most notably in 1986, when Reggie Jackson, then with the Angels, scuffled with an autograph hound. (A disorderly conduct charge against Jackson was later dismissed.)

20 | 10 | 30

8 Griff's

Houston

A CITY STAPLE since 1965, the bar is known for Griff's Army, the regulars who convene to take in a game at the bar or board chartered buses to various stadiums. In 1994 the troops staged a preemptive strike of the baseball season, picketing in front of the Astrodome in protest of the planned players' strike later that week. Sports figures from Roger Clemens to Oksana Baiul have been known to stop by Griff's, which prides itself on its dive-bar status. "We're nothing more than a little hole in the wall," says owner Travis Adair, "which is exactly the way we like it." The bar's sign fits in perfectly: It's been misspelled for years.

18 | 20 | 25

9 Green Valley Ranch

Henderson, Nev.

CAESARS AND its Strip-side ilk may be more famous, but the hidden gem of Vegas sports books isn't even in Vegas. Nestled amid a plush resort 20 minutes to the south, the Green Valley book feels like the largest, nicest living room a sports fan could ever hope to be in. It features big comfy swivel chairs, roaming waitresses, good food and a core group of regulars who have become like family over the years. Even better, as opposed to many books on the Strip, you can actually get a seat. For those who like to gamble, there is no finer place in the country to watch March Madness.

24 | 4 | 12

10 Chappell's Restaurant and Museum

Kansas City, Mo.

WHEN A university holds a class in your bar, you must be doing something right. Northwest Missouri State conducts a sports memorabilia class at Chappell's, home to the largest personal collection of sports artifacts in any bar in the country. "You can go to any bar and watch a game," says owner Jim Chappell, whose bar has more than 10,000 items, including an autographed pair of Muhammad Ali's gloves and the Oakland A's 1974 World Series trophy. "Here you can get a glimpse of sports history." But you can't watch the Super Bowl: Because of its business-district location, Chappell's closes on Sundays.

4 | 4 | 20

TIPPLING POINT O'Harro (in headdress at a Redskins' Super Bowl party) opened Champions in 1983, and four years later Marriott took it national.

a gala, he sidled up to Jim Kelly and told him he could tend bar that night at Champions on the house; Kelly of course brought 23 other QBs with him, and as O'Harro correctly points out, "You can't buy buzz like that."

His next breakthrough came when it dawned on him that the most avid fans are alumni. He contacted the University of Arizona, his alma mater, and the bar hosted an alumni party for a game against UCLA. The place was so full you couldn't move, on a usually dead Saturday afternoon no less. He'd struck gold. He started calling around to other schools. Sometimes there was only a radio broadcast available, but it didn't matter. In a city like D.C., where so many people are from somewhere else, the camaraderie was what drew people. Where O'Harro saw profit, Desmond saw community. "There was a tremendous need of people from other places to come together and cheer on their team," he says. "It was really heartwarming to see."

Soon O'Harro changed Champions' tagline to The Ultimate Sports Bar. Not surprisingly, there was a demand for the concept. So O'Harro opened another one in the D.C. area, and then, in 1986, Marriott approached him: The hotelier wanted to make Champions the first franchised sports bar. Within a year a Boston Champions opened with Larry Bird and Jim Brown on hand for the opening. Within 10 years Champions had expanded overseas and today remains the largest international sports bar franchise, with 34 locations. (O'Harro and Desmond sold their interest in 1992.)

5 McDuffy's

Tempe, Ariz.

THE FOLKS at McDuffy's have an impressive claim to fame: Since opening in '88, the bar has shown every NFL and NCAA men's basketball tournament game. Given Tempe's population of relocated citizens, McDuffy's goes out of its way to secure NFL preseason games, soccer and college hockey—in particular the games of Minnesota and North Dakota, whose fans turn out regularly. Says manager Jeff Flaherty, "We are known as the bar that gets the most obscure games." McDuffy's also becomes a de facto home bar during the Fiesta Bowl: In '03 it set up a big screen in the parking lot for Ohio State fans which tripled the bar's capacity.

84 | 26 | 26

6 Jack & Dan's

Spokane

THIS BAR, located a couple of blocks from the Gonzaga campus, is best known for being co-owned by the father of Spokane's greatest sports hero, John Stockton. Jack Stockton, a part-owner since 1961, knows his son's fame is good for business, but he reminds people, "I was here before John ever bounced a ball in the pros." He famously keeps no pictures of his son at the bar, but there is one connection to his son's career. Jack's current partner (to whom the bar's namesake, Dan Crowley, sold his stake 14 years ago) is Jeff Condill, John's former backcourtmate at Gonzaga.

14 | 22 | 30

7 The Cubby Bear

Chicago

THE CUBBY Bear, which has been around since 1946, swallows up the southwest corner of Clark and Addison streets, a long foul ball from home plate at Wrigley Field. In the thicket of Wrigleyville bars (on game days on the North Side the only commodity more common than a Cubs fan's lament is a cold pint), the Cubby Bear stands out by virtue of its size (30,000 square feet) and prime position, overlooking the Wrigley marquee. Live music was introduced in 1988, but the Cubby Bear knows its clientele: When the Cubs play day games, it opens at 10 a.m., making it Chicago's best beer-for-breakfast joint too.

100 | 18 | 17

11 Majerle's

Phoenix

"I OPENED the bar basically to have a place for the guys to come after games," says former Suns shooting guard Dan Majerle of his sports bar, which is located a block from America West Arena. "I never dreamed it would take off like it did." Twelve years later the bar has become an essential stop for visitors in town for games, conventions or even the symphony, also located nearby. Majerle, who does color commentary on Suns games, still drops by the bar four or five times a week. "I've bartended, but usually I don't go there to work," he says. "I'm just there to hang out and enjoy myself."

20 | 8 | 12

12 Rusty's Last Chance Saloon

Manhattan, Kans.

OUR FIRST (and only) Manhattan choice is not in New York City. Rusty's boasts five interconnected buildings' worth of pure K-State fervor and hospitality. Cheap brew, hickory-smoked barbecue, and every weekend and especially after Kansas State games, it's like a big block party. After the Wildcats beat Nebraska in '98 and 2000, students uprooted the goalposts and marched them down to Rusty's, where they were given a place of honor on the roof (until the athletic department came and fetched them, that is). As for cover charges, Rusty's motto is: no cover, never had it, never will.

55 | 18 | 60

13 State Street Brats

Madison, Wis.

SIMPLY THE best sports bar in the nation's best college sports town. This is where the Grateful Red and alums have been gathering since 1953 to do what Wisconsinites do so well: drink and root. They eat grilled red brats (sausages to you) and beer-boiled white brats, chow on cheese curds (if you're not from Wisconsin, don't ask) and toss back pints of Spotted Cow or Leinenkugel's amid the Badgerphernalia. State Street also boasts the best drink special in the land: Flip Night on Tuesdays. On every drink poured, the bartender flips a coin; if you win, the drink is 75% off; if you don't win, it's full price. You can't lose.

22 | 17 | 13

COURTESY OF MIKE O'HARRO (TOP); SIGNS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JASON WISE; CHRIS ANDERSON; TODD ROSENBERG; DAVID STLUKA; PETE AIKEN; JASON WISE

Naturally, once Champions became successful, "every Greek restaurant in town put up a couple of TVs and called itself a sports bar," Desmond says with a laugh. Athletes got into the act as well, among them Jim Kelly, Lawrence Taylor, Dan Marino and even Jay Schroeder. (That one didn't last long.) Bar owners realized the beauty of the genre; for the investment of a satellite dish they could attract a recurring, captive audience—no one switches bars in the middle of a football game—predisposed to drinking large amounts of alcohol and bringing their friends. The next step, it seemed, was to create a place where people could not only watch sports but also play them. In 1987 a young bar designer named Michael Graves, who's now with the Jillian's chain, and two partners opened what he called a "sportatorium" in Baltimore and dubbed it the Original Sports Bar. It was something of a beta model for the ESPN Zones of the future. The 19,000-square-foot complex featured 45 TVs, a video arcade, a boxing ring, a regulation-height basketball hoop, skee ball and shuffleboard. It lasted only a few years, but regardless, the bar, so to speak, had been raised.

What happened next was a blur of commerce and cross-promotion. Pro sports were in the midst of a boom. Theme restaurants became all the rage. Some, such as the Hard Rock Cafe, worked. Others, like Planet Hollywood, did not. (The sports bar equivalent was the unsuccessful All-Star Café chain, which billed Ken Griffey Jr., Shaquille O'Neal, Wayne Gretzky and Joe Montana as its celebrity owners.) In 1998, after considering various themes, Disney opted for the ESPN brand and set up a beachhead in the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, pouring $15 million into construction. It was an orgy of synergy; Chris Berman aired his *Monday Night Football* halftime show live from the place, ESPN "personalities" dropped by, and everywhere the interior was branded. There were lines out the door from the start. Once that location succeeded, it led to Times Square and Chicago and six other "Zones," as ESPN calls them. Similar bars were

14 Houndstooth

Tuscaloosa, Ala.

OPENED IN 1989 and just a two-minute walk from Bryant-Denny Stadium, the Houndstooth is named, as any Southerner can tell you, for the checked brown hat favored by longtime Crimson Tide coach Bear Bryant, though that's the one item missing from the extensive 'Bama memorabilia. The bar is the place to go on game day in Tuscaloosa. (When Mercedes-Benz executives were being wooed to build a plant in Alabama in 1993, the welcoming committee brought the Germans in for drinks.) But beware the morning after: The Houndstooth maintains a four-year-old archive of bar photos on its website.

27 | 1 | 15

15 Joe Senser's

Bloomington, Minn.

SENSER, A former Vikings tight end, is the owner of an obscure piece of Twin Cities sports trivia—he dropped the final pass thrown at Metropolitan Stadium and caught the first TD pass at The Metrodome. In business since 1988 and now in three locations, Senser says he spends more than $45,000 annually to get every available sports TV package and it pays off with crowds like the nearly 400 Nebraska alumni who gather every Saturday to root on Big Red. Come Sunday the place is split between Vikings and Packers fans, which makes NFL games between the Black and Blue rivals as spicy as Senser's waffle fries.

25 | 16 | 30

16 Three Dollar Cafe

Atlanta

WHEN ABOUT 300 Penn State alumni come by the flagship Buckhead location of this Georgia chain, as they do every football Saturday, Three Dollar Cafe can put them all in the back room and still have room for the more than 700 other patrons—most of them SEC and ACC fans, particularly Georgia Tech partisans—in their main room and outdoor patio. Big is the theme here, as evidenced by the vast number of TVs and the huge selection of beers. The outdoor seating, promoted as "the patio to be seen on," has drawn such luminaries as Charles Barkley, Michael Vick, Chipper Jones and even Rod Tidwell himself, Cuba Gooding Jr.

100 | 9 | 300

20 Crystal City Pub

Crystal City, Va.

OPENED IN 1994 by three college buddies from Mount St. Mary's who were weaned on the original Champions in D.C., Crystal City feels like a sports bar crossed with an OTB parlor. Digital scoreboards show the latest lines, and wi-fi access allows industrious patrons to follow other games. Once a hangout for Redskins before the team changed stadiums—quarterback Trent Green would come in after games—it now boasts a little of everything: pool tables, live music, alumni groups, memorabilia and the occasional pack of suspiciously attractive women, whose presence can be traced to a co-owner who also runs a strip club.

70 | 13 | 16

21 Corner Club

Moscow, Idaho

A CAREFREE atmosphere (perhaps enhanced by the traditional 32-ounce beer glasses) prevails at this popular University of Idaho hangout, which opened in 1948. Consider that for much of its history, the most famous item in the bar was a nail hammered into a ceiling beam, daring anyone to try to match the 11′ 3″ leap made by former Vandals basketball star Gus Johnson. The mark stood for 23 years until it was equaled by Southern Idaho's Joey Johnson (Gus's cousin) in 1986. (The nail was removed in 1991 when half the bar was torn down to make room for a freeway, but the stories are still told fondly.)

9 | 10 | 19

22 Orlando Ale House

Orlando

FOR SOME sports bars, proximity to the local arena is vital to their success. Not the Ale House, which is 10 miles from the TD Waterhouse Center, home of the Orlando Magic, but draws fans from all over the Orlando area. Sundays look like a scene from the Pro Bowl, as fans don their favorite team jerseys and wait in line for as long as 20 minutes to get into the 8,000-square-foot establishment. Wearing the right jersey can matter: General manager Danny Davis sometimes determines which game gets its audio cranked up by surveying the crowd to see which team's colors are the most popular.

42 | 36 | 48

SIGNS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KENT GIDLEY; BRUCE KLUCKHOHN; GREG FOSTER; GARY BOGDON; CHRIS ANDERSON; SIMON BRUTY

springing up elsewhere: Dave & Busters, which began in Dallas in 1982 and went public in 1995, and Jock and Jills, and Jillian's quickly expanded as well. The result was predictable: Just as family-owned small businesses crumbled in the face of Wal-Mart's march across America, it became harder and harder for the neighborhood joint to survive in the face of these megabars and their brethren.

IS THIS A BAR? Disney's family-first philosophy prevails at its rapidly growing ESPN Zones, making them a boon to some but an abomination to others.

ON A recent Friday night, O'Harro and Desmond, who is now a vice president and lobbyist for Lockheed Martin, invited a reporter to meet them at a sports bar O'Harro had decorated, Crystal City Sports Pub in Arlington, Va. It is a spacious place, large without feeling too big, and the air was heavy with the sound of cracking billiard balls, televised games and loud conversation. The female bartender wore a tight T-shirt and smiled. Over beers and steak bites, the two men talked about what makes a great sports bar.

"A sports bar has to have a personal touch," said O'Harro, 65, who was wearing a faux varsity jacket with his name inscribed on the front and POVERTY SUCKS, the tagline of a best-selling poster he designed and posed for, on the back.

Desmond, 70, who is down-to-earth and modest, the opposite of the flashy O'Harro, agreed. "This is a good bar because it's dedicated," he said, looking around. "They don't just throw up three TVs and call it a sports bar. See that over there"—he points to a

17 Bulldog Lounge

Berwick, Pa.

IN THE heart of high school football country in northeastern Pennsylvania, there's a special small-town feel at the Bulldog Lounge, home base for fans of the six-time state champion Berwick High Bulldogs, who play across the street at Crispin Field. On game days the staff sets up a tent, pours Yuengling and puts out a spread of meatball and sausage hoagies, soups and pierogi. The bar's biggest day was in 1988, when Berwick beat Aliquippa for the state title. "It was a road game, and it snowed that day," says owner Guy Miller, "and I remember all the friends and family waiting here for the kids to come back home."

3 | 3 | 15

18 Scholz Garten

Austin

SAID TO be the oldest continuously operating business in the state of Texas, the Scholz Garten opened in 1866, founded as a tavern and social club for Austin's German community by August Scholz, an immigrant and Civil War veteran. (He wore the gray.) The bar was home to German singing groups in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and in the 1950s and '60s, situated a half mile from the state capitol, it became a clubhouse for Texas's liberal politicians. Now it's the standard pre- and postgame stop on UT football game days, though in recent years, says manager Fred Reese, it's drawn well for other Big 12 sports too.

14 | 21 | 25

19 Sports Column

Denver

OPENED IN 1995 on the eve of the Colorado Rockies' first game at Coors Field, the Sports Column was in prime position to flourish when the Broncos and the Avalanche ruled their respective sports in the late '90s. In a city where sports bars are as common as home runs in the mile-high air, the Sports Column has one distinctive touch that's especially nice: At the start of the NFL, NBA, NHL and baseball seasons, every team's banner hangs from the rafters—that is, until the team's elimination from title contention, when its colors are ceremonially removed from the bar's firmament.

39 | 20 | 25

23 Playmakers

Fargo, N.D.

LOCATED DEEP in the heart of the Red River Valley, Playmakers is part of a sports and entertainment complex that draws crowds from many miles away. Patrons feel as if they're in the game as soon as they walk through the door, as the entire floor is tiled to replicate a football field, complete with hash marks and goalposts. Fargo is Vikings and Packers country, so Playmakers is the place to be for Minnesota and Green Bay's biannual clashes. And if Vikes versus the Pack isn't intense enough, fans can step right next door to the Pavilion for the regional qualifiers of the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

35 | 10 | 35

24 Bear's Lair Pub

Berkeley, Calif.

EVERYTHING ONE could want in a bar—its own home-brewed beer, good grub and one's own stein hanging from the rafters as part of the Mug Club. Plus there's plenty of Big Game tradition. From a seat at the tables, which are the original benches from Memorial Stadium, you can stare up at the goalposts from the 2002 Big Game (won by Cal, 30–7) that adorn the ceiling. Come in post-football or -hoops and drink with the Cal band and Oski the Bear (the mascot), who might be prevailed upon to do his trick of drinking two steins through a tube funneled through one of his eyeholes.

6 | 20 | 15

25 The National

Anaheim

ACROSS THE street from Angel Stadium stands one of Southern California's most popular sports watering hole. Though crowds convene for all sports, baseball provides the dominant motif at the National. The place is laid out like a baseball diamond, with real stadium seats (signed by various sports figures) and a bar area where the infield would be. Looking for a bite to eat? Head out to the rightfield stands for the restaurant area; in the leftfield stands a game of pool is available on one of the National's 11 full-sized tables. For those who prefer the open air, go deep to the Outfield, the National's expansive patio.

65 | 15 | 16

SIMON BRUTY (TOP); SIGNS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOSHUA J. DUDECK; DARREN CARROLL; TIM DEFRISCO; PHIL ELLSWORTH; BRAD MANGIN; DAN KOECK

man eating by himself—"that's a good sign. If a guy feels comfortable eating alone, it means it's a good place."

O'Harro took a sip of his drink. "You know what makes a good sports bar? Fun. Did I have a good time? That's the only reason to go to a sports bar."

Desmond nods. "It needs to be a place you can have a one-on-one conversation," he says. "The bartender's gotta have that whiskey on the rocks that you always have ready for you when you sit down. You'll never get a friendly bartender at the corporate places. They have a playbook. 'You can't pull those tables together.' It's all numbers."

Joe Healey has a similar take. Runyon's closed in 1996—the same year as the Eliot Lounge—in part because of what he calls the "nouveau sports bars. Places were opening up with TV monitors everywhere in the joint, including in the restrooms, and boxing rings in the middle of the restaurant. I couldn't compete with that."

Healey, 63, now lives in North Palm Beach, where he plays golf, keeps in touch with his old buddies via e-mail and works "for fun" as a bartender at a local joint. He doesn't have much use for the sports bars of today. "I don't enjoy them. Once in a while I'll go. I'd rather get the DirecTV and watch at home. These places, people watch the game, and nothing else seems to matter. Our place was the opposite: The game was on, you could watch it if you wanted to. But our place was where you sat around and b.s.'d and had a good steak."

ASK THOSE in the industry about the future of sports bars, and one word comes up again and again: *technology*. The Zones are moving to plasma and hi-definition on all their TVs and investigating how to allow customers to not only change the feed at their tableside monitor but also choose which camera angle they want to see. Others have tapped into that great wingman of sports viewing: having a stake in the game. Not only

Requiem for a Beloved Bar

Before it closed in 1996, the Eliot Lounge in Boston was one of the best sports bars ever

ONCE, THERE WAS a place where nobody batted an eye the night the horse walked in. The horse stopped to visit with everyone sitting at the bar, and then it took eight people to get him out again, and nobody in the place thought it at all remarkable, though they thought the horse well-behaved.

Once, there was a place where the Stanford band marched in playing *Truckin'* and marched out playing *White Punks on Dope*. Once, there was a place where Fuzzy Zoeller came in for a drink at the end of the day and wound up tending bar until four in the morning, in contravention of every local ordinance. Once, there was a place where a future Olympic gold-medal runner spent the night of the Boston Marathon biting complete strangers on their hindquarters and playing the trumpet besides. *Citius, altius, munchius*, with a flourish.

And then there was the day in 2000 when I had just finished writing a book and I was halfway to my car on my way to toast the occasion before I remembered that the place wasn't there anymore. All of the celebration went out of me and into the air because there didn't seem to be any real place for it to go.

I first went to the Eliot Lounge, in 1979, for the food—specifically for the free happy-hour snacks. I had taken a job with *The Boston Phoenix*, the offices of which were located directly across Massachusetts Avenue from the Eliot in Boston's Back Bay. The *Phoenix* salaries were as underground as the copy, so cheddar on a Ritz fulfilled my most basic nutritional requirement. Namely, that it was free. I was in there after work every night, more or less, for the next five years.

GLORY DAYS Leonard, the Eliot's barkeep, built a sense of community through sports.

The place had already achieved some standing by the time I started going there. Red Sox pitcher Bill Lee famously commented after his loss to Cincinnati in Game 7 of the 1975 World Series, "[Don] Gullett will go to the Hall of Fame, and I will go to the Eliot Lounge." (For the record, Lee was only half right.) And the Eliot became famous for its association with the Boston Marathon, which ran right by the place every April. But it's fair to call the Eliot a "sports bar" only if the emphasis is placed—as it properly should be—on the second word. The Eliot was a great sports bar because it was a great bar.

It opened shortly after Prohibition closed down; old-timers remembered that there once was an organ suspended above the bar that played tunes for the spooning swells in the darkened corners. The place fell into disrepair—it got so dead, people used to come there to play chess—and languished until Tommy Leonard came to work there in 1972 as the daytime bartender.

He was an orphan with the same birthday as FDR. A former Marine and a runner himself—SI ran a picture of him, head down, pushing through the end of the 1956 Boston Marathon—Tommy was the heart and soul of what the Eliot became. He was a man of unbridled, limitless passions that ran in a hundred different directions, all at the same time. (Once, smitten by Jessica Lange's performance in *Tootsie*, Tommy briefly abandoned his Budweiser and began drinking Chablis, as Lange's character in the movie does, resulting in the Los Alamos of hangovers.) I remember one particular afternoon during my first year as a regular. Jacqueline Gareau of Canada had been the actual winner of the women's division of the 1980 Boston Marathon. However, she'd famously crossed the finish line after Rosie Ruiz. Eventually, the marathon officials had a little ceremony at which Gareau got her medal and laurel wreath, but Leonard didn't think that was enough. So he brought Gareau and her husband to the Eliot, where she got a couple dozen roses and a spirited chorus of *O Canada* from the assembled at the bar, albeit a chorus that fell into heartfelt babble long about, *"the true North, strong and free."* Gareau cried a little, and we all cheered and stayed in the place for a very long time.

There are occasional Eliot reunions, but they're not at the Eliot. That's been gone since the bar lost its lease and closed in 1996. I rarely go to the reunions. You can see the people, but you can't live the days again. Once, there was a place, you see, and once, there were the days.

—Charles P. Pierce

DAMIEN STROHMEYER

does Crystal City, for example, post the betting lines on digital Vegas-like scoreboards, but also the whole place is wired for wi-fi, allowing customers to bring laptops and surf the Web to find—oh, let's see—maybe an Internet betting site. "It's great for businessmen holding lunch meetings," says co-owner Art Dougherty, with all the conviction of a head-shop owner selling a bong for "tobacco use only."

Of course, actual sports books in Vegas have long been taking things further: offering a place to have a beer, watch the game and then cash a ticket. But for many years they were rather dreary places, smoky and grungy. Sports books like Green Valley Ranch in Henderson, Nev., a 20-minute drive from the bustle of the Strip, are changing that. Luxurious without being exclusive, Green Valley Ranch boasts 22 TVs; more than 100 seats, each of which comes with its own librarylike cubicle and reading light; a relatively quiet atmosphere (no trilling slot machines); and a core group of regulars. ("Out of 10 seats at the bar, eight are sat on by the same people," says sports manager Kelly Downey.) "There's a social camaraderie here," said Anthony Massucci, one of the regulars. "Everybody's cheering for everybody else." Added Richard Cordello, another regular, from the other side of the bar, "It's a place were guys can express thoughts and ideas and differences of opinion. They can argue. They can really get into debating every aspect of the game. When they're at home, who can they do that with, their dog?"

Green Valley has been so successful, it is planning to expand the sports book to triple its size. Likewise, Crystal City is adding a third floor. As with all the bars, bigger is now better.

> One Green Valley Ranch regular says, "It's a place where guys can really get into debating every aspect of the game. When they're home, who can they do that with, their dog?"

SO WHAT does all this mean, other than that you will never, ever go without a place to see the Hawks-Warriors game if you really must subject yourself to that? Does it mean that pubs are giving way to a nation of chains, Sports Barnes & Nobles numbing in their sameness and, as Costas puts it, "less authentic as a representation of their time and place"? Yes, and no.

Undoubtedly, people will continue to flock to the megabars, which will continue to multiply. ESPN plans to have 20 Zones up and running over the next 10 years. And this is a good thing—such places fill a niche and provide an "event" atmosphere. But at the same time, there will always be more intimate places, rich with character; they may just be harder to find amid all the blinking neon lights.

That's why such taverns deserve to be honored. So in deciding what makes a great sports bar, SI looked for places that kept the spirit of Toots Shor's and Runyon's alive while incorporating the best of the Champions buzz. Bars that qualify as that "third place." You know, there's home, there's the office, and then there's the third place. This means that camaraderie is as important as the clarity of the TVs. Call it the *Cheers* factor; after all, can you picture Sam Malone tending bar in a referee's uniform with a name tag?

At its best, a sports bar is like a petri dish. You put all these people together, you put the games on, and you see what happens. It's also an escape, a place where the lifetime slugging percentage of Will Clark is of more interest than the Dow Jones Industrial Average, a place where all men are equal, provided they can hold both their liquor and their own in a discussion of the Eagles-Niners game. A sports bar should have some history and a sense of permanence. It should be a place that starts arguments and resolves them. A place where someone will know that it's .497—Clark's slugging percentage, that is—and won't be afraid to tell you. In sum, a place that feels like a community. Henry David Thoreau once said, "Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they're after."

We feel the same way about great sports bars. The first time you go there may be to watch a game, but that's not the reason you go back. □

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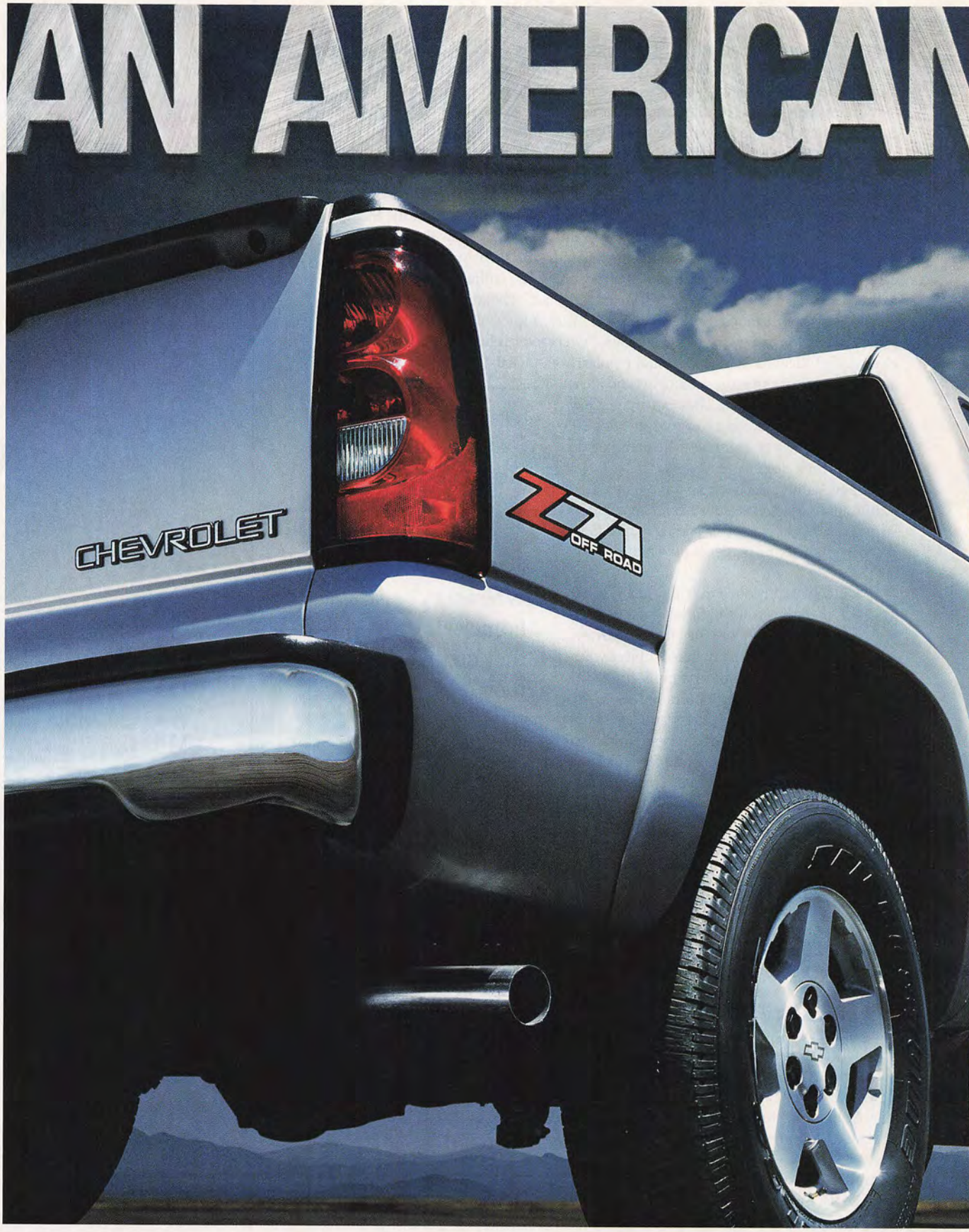

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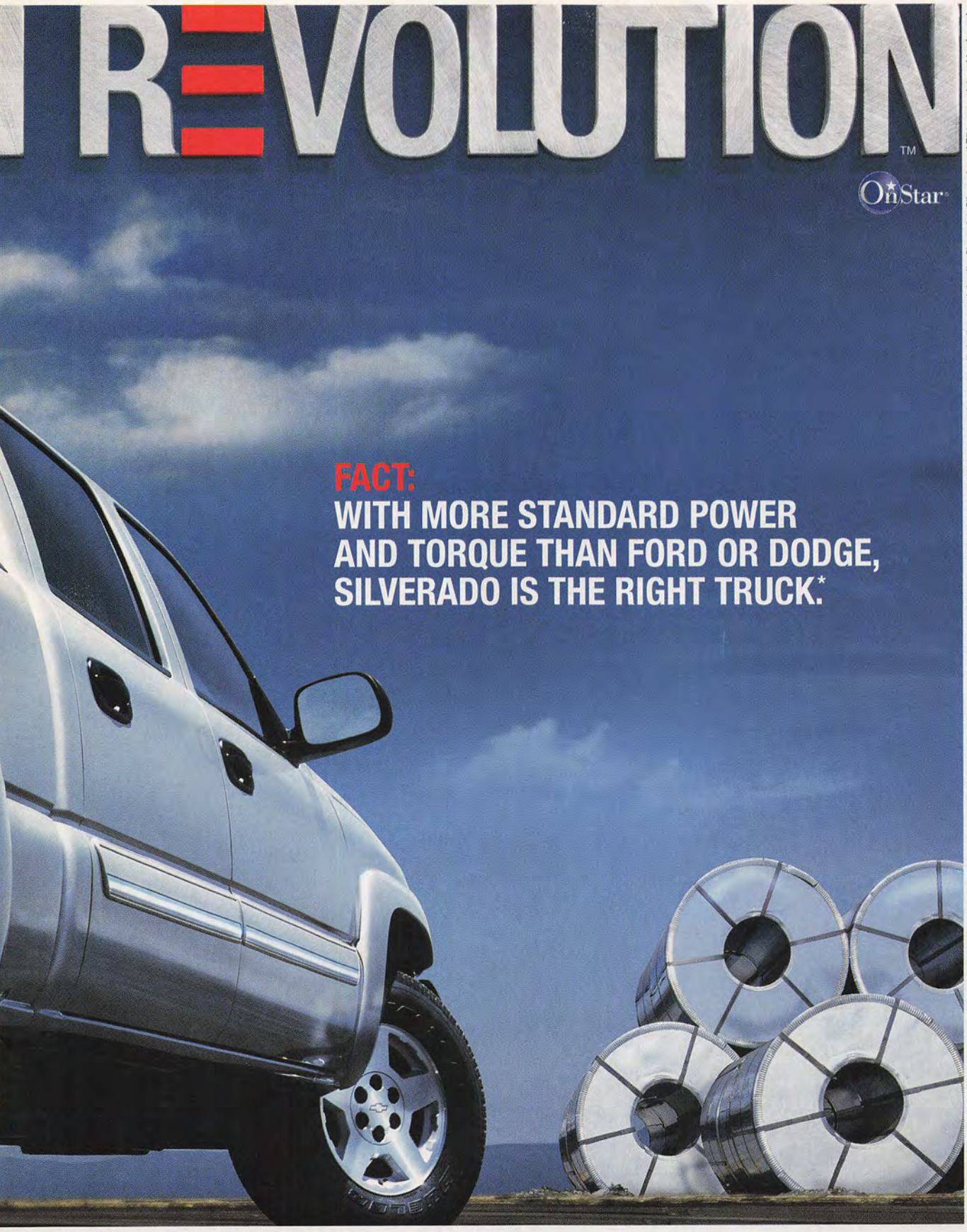

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SKIING

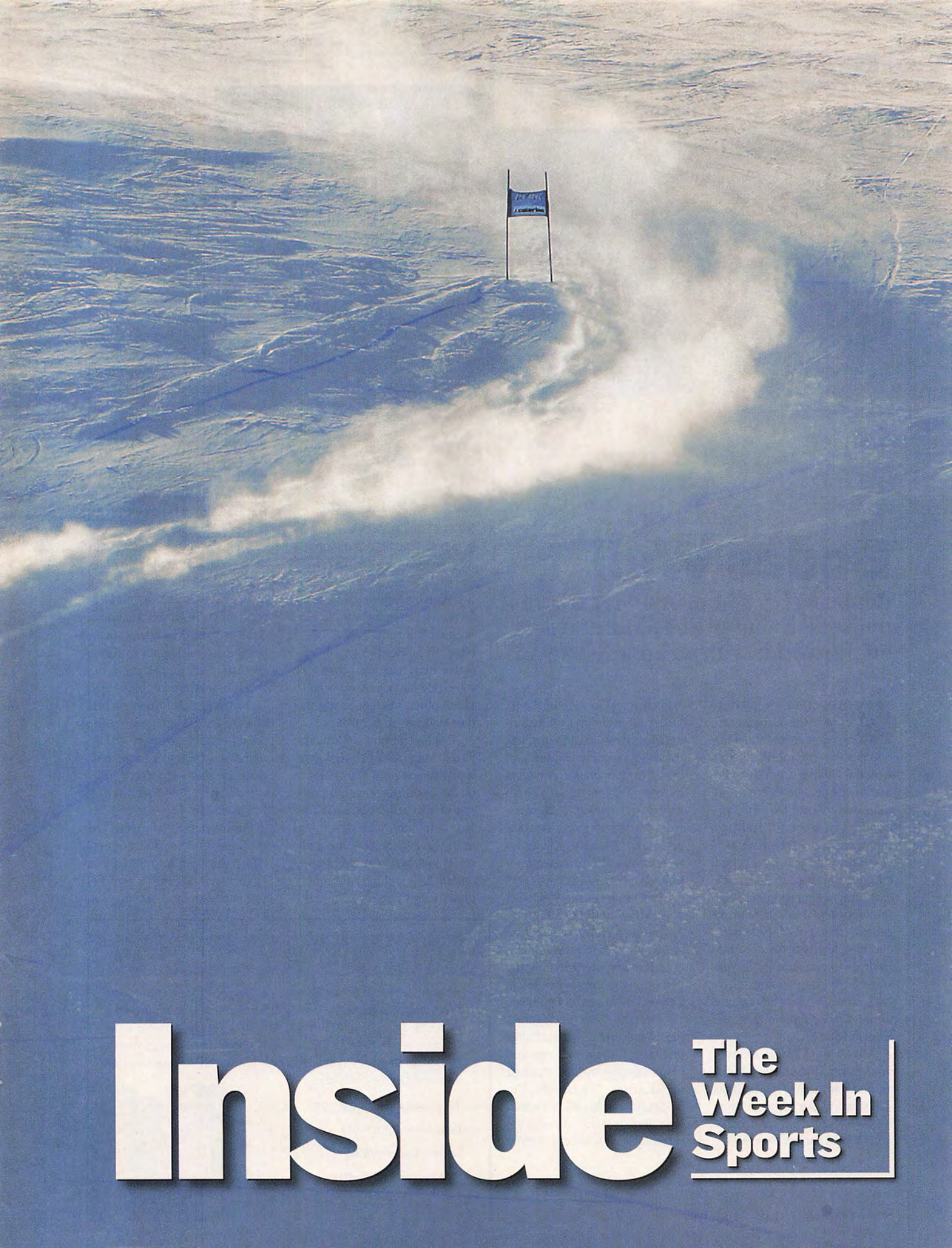
Bode Miller gets a blazing start at the world championships • Little-known Californian a surprise medalist in the Super G

THE NBA

Nuggets' G.M. turns to a proven—if controversial—coach • Scout: Mobley will help the Kings to six more victories

DANGEROUS CURVES Lindsey Kildow of the U.S. finished ninth on a tough Super G course at last week's world championships in Bormio, Italy.

Photograph by Simon Bruty



Inside

The Week In Sports

Inside Skiing

by Tim Layden

Bodes Well

Bouncing back from injuries and a midseason slump, Bode Miller kicked off the worlds with an impressive win

BODE MILLER groaned in agony last Saturday afternoon as he folded his body into a gray minivan that would ferry him from the gold medalist's press conference at the Alpine World Ski Championships in Bormio, Italy, to mandatory drug testing at a small hospital nearby. He had diligently hydrated himself since early morning to facilitate swift production of a postrace urine sample (required of medalists), and now, nearly two hours after having won the Super G, he was suffering and squirming. "Seriously, dude," Miller said urgently to the driver. "I'm going to pee all over your car."

While holding his bladder was unpleasant, it wasn't as painful as the assortment of injuries that had struck Miller in the previous two weeks of his long and ambitious World Cup season. Miller expects to ski in each of the 35 races on the circuit (not including these world championships, which are a separate competition) in all five disciplines in pursuit of the overall points title, which no American has won in 22 years. He is the only skier who has competed in all 25 races to date, and—with six weeks left in the season—he leads the standings with 1,093 points, 95 more than Benni Raich of Austria. But Miller arrived in Bormio in a slump of sorts; he scored just two top three finishes in January after reaching the podium eight times between late October and the end of December.

"Mentally, I feel pretty good," the 27-year-old Miller said after producing the required urine and blood samples without incident on Saturday. "Physically, I'm holding up not as well as I would have liked." He was sitting in the catacombs of an ancient Bormio home, an underground hideaway he used for dressing into his racing gear before his Super G win, blissfully hidden from the horde of fans that chase him across Europe. (He had an escort of four police officers when leaving the race stadium on Saturday.)

HIGH STAKES Miller's Super G gold bolstered his reputation for coming through in big races.

"I've had a bunch of little injuries," Miller said. "My right arm is all bruised from when I hit it on the ice during downhill training in Kitzbühel [Austria, on Jan. 20]; then I hurt something in my rib cage pulling out a recovery in slalom [also at Kitzbühel, on Jan. 23]; and the patella tendinitis in my left knee flared up the other day. I've had that since I was 18, but it had been better until I really cranked on the knee in slalom training. I had been in physically awesome shape, but then all this stuff hit in, like, five days."

The sudden accumulation of injuries underscores the weight of Miller's nearly five-month chase. His victory in Saturday's race equally underscores his ability to deliver his best work under the greatest pressure. "The worlds are coming at a very good time for Bode," said U.S. Alpine director Jesse Hunt before the competition began. "He struggled in January, because January is a big slalom month and he hasn't gotten his rhythm going in slalom. But Bode loves big events. He'll be motivated. Watch."

Miller won the Super G gold by .14 of a second over Austrian Michael Walchhofer on a thinker's course that left veteran stars Hermann Maier of Austria and Daron Rahlves of the U.S. flogging themselves for skiing tentatively. Miller erred on a key jump early in the run but recovered aggressively. "It's magic," said former French downhiller Luc Alphand. "A mistake is lost time, and then you lose more time trying to catch up. But Bode, he *gains* time afterward."

Said Miller, "My history is that I do well in big races, and I can definitely put it on the line. [In the Super G] I put down a good effort, but I don't think I skied all that well, which is a conflict. But at this point, I can process

On Top of the Worlds

Bode Miller's win in last Saturday's Super G was his fourth career world championship victory, equaling the record for the most by a U.S. skier, held by Tamara McKinney *(below)*. Here are the Americans who have earned the most world championship medals (does not include Olympics, which before 1984 were counted as world championships).

Tamara McKinney (1985–89) 4
Bode Miller (2003–05) 4
Christin Cooper (1982) 3
Picabo Street (1993–96) 3

SIMON BRUTY (2); CORBIS (MCKINNEY)

that." Translation: He'll keep the medal.

Miller has four events left in Bormio before the championships end on Feb. 13, and he will be a solid medal favorite in three of them. He could threaten Lasse Kjus's towering record of five medals in a single worlds, which the Norwegian great set in 1999.

Miller was looking to have some fun, too. A lifelong New England Patriots fan, he toyed with the idea of jetting out of Italy after the downhill on Feb. 5 to attend the Super Bowl and then returning for the giant slalom three days after the game. Such a move would have amped-up the discussion on the circuit of Miller's nightlife, an always-simmering topic.

"I'm probably not going to go," Miller said on Saturday. "I can't stir the pot that much. If I didn't win all the races afterward, people would be pointing to the trip. In reality, we have a few days off [in the worlds schedule], and if I stay here, I'll go out and party and I'll be tired. If I fly back for the game, I'll party and I'll be tired, but [I'll have seen] the Super Bowl. But sometimes you have to consider the potential repercussions."

SUPER G SURPRISE

Breakthrough Bronze For U.S.'s Mancuso

Julia Mancuso is only 20, but by her precocious standards, the bronze medal she unexpectedly won in Sunday's women's Super G at the world championships was overdue.

Mancuso was on skis at age two and enrolled in the Mighty Mites ski school in

BELIEVE IT Competing in her first world championships, former whiz kid Mancuso showed she'll be an Olympic threat in '06.

Squaw Valley, Calif., at three. "My parents would drop my sister and me off in the morning and pick us up at the big tree in the afternoon," she said on Sunday. "Always at the big tree." Mancuso skied a World Cup race at 15 (making her one of the youngest Americans ever to do so) and won a U.S.-record eight career medals at the world junior championships, including two in 2004.

On Sunday she started 16th among the top 30 racers in the world and upon finishing said bitingly, "I wasn't too pleased with my run." Scarcely half an hour later her time had held up for third place as some of the most accomplished racers in history (Renate Goetschl and Michaela Dorfmeister of Austria and Hilde Gerg of Germany) as well as rising star Lindsey Kildow of the U.S. had either strayed off course or skied slowly on a challenging and deceptively slick run. "Kind of weird," Mancuso said later, reconsidering her analysis. "I always figured at the Olympics or world championships, you had to ski perfect to medal. I guess not."

Mancuso, who is in the middle of a breakout season and ranks 12th in the women's overall World Cup standings with seven top 10 finishes, formulated her race plan while watching videotape on Saturday night. "I was watching some of my good races in [giant slalom] from earlier this year," she said. "And I've been skiing really aggressively, taking a really straight line. So I said to myself, I'm going straight tomorrow." Straight to the medal stand, as it turned out.

LAST RUNS

Kildow Feels Heat Of the Spotlight

Lindsey Kildow, who in recent weeks had raced like the emerging star of the U.S. women's team and been the subject of a sudden wave of media profiles, finished a disappointing ninth in Sunday's Super G. "I'm O.K., I'm just really sad," Kildow, 20, said later, having finished what she admitted was a long cry in her hotel room. "To have so many expectations . . . but that's ski racing. All the media attention, I'm not used to it. But I have to learn to deal with it. I have to analyze what I did wrong [in my race] and what I did wrong in my head and try to change it." That will take time. Kildow, who was scheduled to race at least three more events in Bormio, crashed on Monday morning in the first of three downhill training runs. She was not seriously injured, but the fall can't help her bruised confidence. . . . The bib sponsor for the men's races at the worlds—whose name is featured prominently on the front and back of every skier—is betandwin.com, a Europe-based gambling website that is accepting wagers on the competition. □

CARLO FERRARO/EPA

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TAKING THE FIFTH The 53-year-old Karl started with a pair of wins at NBA stop No. 4.

Mr. Fix-it

Intense? Sure. Controversial? You bet. But to the Nuggets, George Karl was the best hope for salvaging the season

GEORGE KARL is the NBA's version of Billy Martin. Karl's ego and intensity have created conflicts—whether with the Sonics' front office or in the locker room of his last team, the Bucks—but among current coaches with at least eight years of experience, only Gregg Popovich (.653 through Sunday), Jerry Sloan (.620) and Rick Adelman (.616) have a better winning percentage than the .587 Karl earned with four teams over 16 seasons. The controversy surrounding Karl is what led Nuggets G.M. Kiki Vandeweghe, after firing Jeff Bzdelik on Dec. 28, to first explore bringing in a less abrasive coach, such as assistants Phil Johnson of the Jazz or the Mavericks' Del Harris.

So why did Vandeweghe decide last Thursday to sign Karl to a three-year, $9 million contract that includes an option for three more years? Contrary to league-wide rumors, team owner Stan Kroenke didn't order Vandeweghe to make the move. NBA sources say that the two reached an understanding: If a superior coach couldn't be found, then Vandeweghe would hire Karl ASAP in hopes of salvaging the season for Denver (19–25 at week's end).

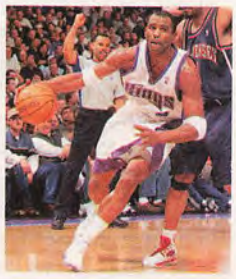
Kroenke did not return calls from SI, but sources familiar with his thinking say that his championship experiences as principal owner of the NHL's Colorado Avalanche and minority owner of the NFL's St. Louis Rams taught him that the hardest part of the Nuggets' climb is still ahead. And tightening the screws and demanding more is Karl's specialty. "George clearly was the best coach, and I told Stan that," says Vandeweghe. "I tried to track down some of his negative publicity and what was behind it, and I didn't think in many cases that it was warranted."

These Nuggets are ripe for improvement under Karl: At both ends they feel more comfortable in the paint than on the perimeter, and they have plenty of upside. "We have good individual defenders but not good team defenders," says Karl, who may explore starting 5' 5" Earl Boykins at the point and shifting Andre Miller to shooting guard to speed up the transition game. In Karl's debut last Friday at Milwaukee, the Nuggets listened attentively in the huddle while going on a 38–20 fourth quarter run in a 106–100 victory. The following night Denver prevailed 95–88 at Indiana, giving the team two road wins after a 5–16 start away from home. "He told us before the game, 'Once we get our confidence, it will be hard for anyone to beat us,' " says star forward Carmelo Anthony. "Our confidence is way up."

Now Karl has more job security than Vandeweghe, who has next season remaining on a five-year, $3.8 million deal. Count on two changes: Karl will preach a win-now philosophy when the Nuggets decide how to draft this spring, and he'll ask Vandeweghe to give up the private workouts he conducts with Anthony and other players. "I love Kiki's input, and if he wants to go into the gym with me and my assistants there, then no problem," Karl says. "But there's a protocol between the coaches and the players."

Yet Karl vows that he and his G.M. will find that common ground. "I need Kiki, and Kiki needs me," says Karl. "I need him to make good decisions, and he needs me to coach my ass off." □

Scout's Take



On **Cuttino Mobley**, who joined the Kings in a Jan. 10 swap of shooting guards that sent Doug Christie to the Magic:

"He had a bad reputation because he got lumped in with Steve Francis: People saw them as the same player, even though Francis isn't as good a one-on-one defender as Mobley. The question is whether Mobley can adapt to Sacramento's style of moving the ball; he's known as a guy who pounds the ball and holds on to it. From what I've seen, he's trying to conform and prove people wrong, like Rasheed Wallace did when he moved to Detroit last season. I bet the Kings win five or six more games with this pickup, proving once again that G.M. Geoff Petrie is very, very good: He gave up a 34-year-old in decline for a 29-year-old who may not have peaked."

GARY DINEEN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (KARL); ROCKY WIDNER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

More Glitz Than Blitz

by Rick Reilly

DO NOT GO to the Super Bowl looking for football. It has about as much to do with football now as Banana Republic has to do with fruit.

The Super Bowl is about one thing and one thing only—celebrities. That became official last year in Houston, at Supe XXXVIII, when Jerry Rice was stopped at an entrance to The Galleria mall. "We got too many celebrities in there," a security guard at one of the doors told him. "Janet Jackson *and* Paris Hilton. It's too crazy."

"What?" Rice said. "You can't keep me from shopping!"

To prove that the Super Bowl is more about glitz than blitz, I want you to take my Celebrity Schmooze Challenge in Jacksonville. See if you can break my 2004 record of 50 celebrities schmoozed, which broke a record once owned by Larry King. Two rules: 1) You must touch the celeb and 2) sports celebs don't count. (At a Super Bowl sports celebrities rank with Wal-Mart greeters.)

Here's how I finagled my Fab 50.

Thursday morning The media hotel lobby is always like the last day of Saigon, but I walk straight into actor Omar Epps, hyping a boxing movie. One. Next I meet Yanni. Or was it Zamfir? Don't care. That's two.

I sneak into the halftime show press conference and meet Nelly (shorter than you think), Kid Rock (taller than you think) and chopper builder Jesse James (scarier than you think). Five.

I spy Joe Montana, who doesn't count, but who did give the Super Bowl its first great celebrity gawking moment when, just before his game-winning drive against Cincinnati in Supe XXIII, he said to his huddle, "Isn't that John Candy?"

Searching for stars along the Jabber Walk—a line of more than 100 talk-radio hosts set up outside the Super Bowl press center—is like shooting celebs in a phone booth. I knock off The Rock, Jay Mohr, Mike O'Malley and a guy who looks a lot like William H. Macy. "We have a rule at the Super Bowl," agent Leigh Steinberg says. "If it looks like the guy, it's probably him." Fine. That's nine.

Thursday night The movie *Barbershop 2* premieres (Ice Cube, Cedric the Entertainer and Run from Run DMC—that's 12), even though it has zippo to do with football. "But it's about community, just *like* a Super Bowl," says a publicity man. Gag me.

At the Madden EA party I see Anthony Anderson, then P. Diddy arrives with a squad car, three motorcycle cops and a three-SUV posse. That's 14. A member of Diddy's entourage pushes me out of the way—it's Reggie Jackson. Hey, you know you're big when your stooges are celebs.

Friday night The Super Bowl has more celeb parties than Donald Trump has hairstylists. At one I meet Pauly Shore, then blow him off for *Playboy*'s 50th-anniversary playmate, Colleen Shannon, who's having a *very* hard time picking a team. "You don't know who's playing, do you?" I finally ask.

"Uh, no," she admits. Don't care. Sixteen.

I see Adam Carolla (17), who explains the Super Celebrity phenomenon. "If one celebrity does something, we all do it," he says. "If celebrities started jumping off a cliff, we'd all do that. I just think it'd be great if Ben Affleck and Alec Baldwin did it first."

The *Maxim* party is so lousy with celebs you get tan off the minicam lights. I check off so many that I just *have* to go to smaller type: Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore, Johnny Knoxville, Janet Jackson, Dave Navarro, Joey Fatone (did you know, if you *don't* rearrange the letters, it spells "fat one"?), the *Joe Millionaire* guy, Pamela Anderson and the geeky guy from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. O.K., I didn't actually *meet* them all, but Larry King can't read type this small. That's 26.

> The Super Bowl is about one thing—celebrities, so take my Celebrity Schmooze Challenge in Jacksonville.

Saturday night Tickets to the *Playboy* party—at which guests can paint feathers on nude models—are going for $1,300. Ticket to the game: $500. Still, I get Jimmy Fallon, Tara Reid, Jaime Pressly and Michelle Branch. That's 30.

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED's party would make Nero blush, though, sadly, no girls are wearing Benjamin Moore. Still, I click off Jay-Z, Beyoncé, LL Cool J, Bill O'Reilly (when's the last time you saw *those* names in a row?), Roshumba, Petra Nemcova, Molly Sims and Michael Chiklis. That's 38.

Sunday afternoon At the Cadillac Celebrity Go-Kart Race I get David Arquette, Billy Bush and Paris Hilton, who gets a roll in the hay when Jimmy Kimmel slams his runaway kart into the hay bale she's standing on, flipping her elbow over inheritance. That's 42.

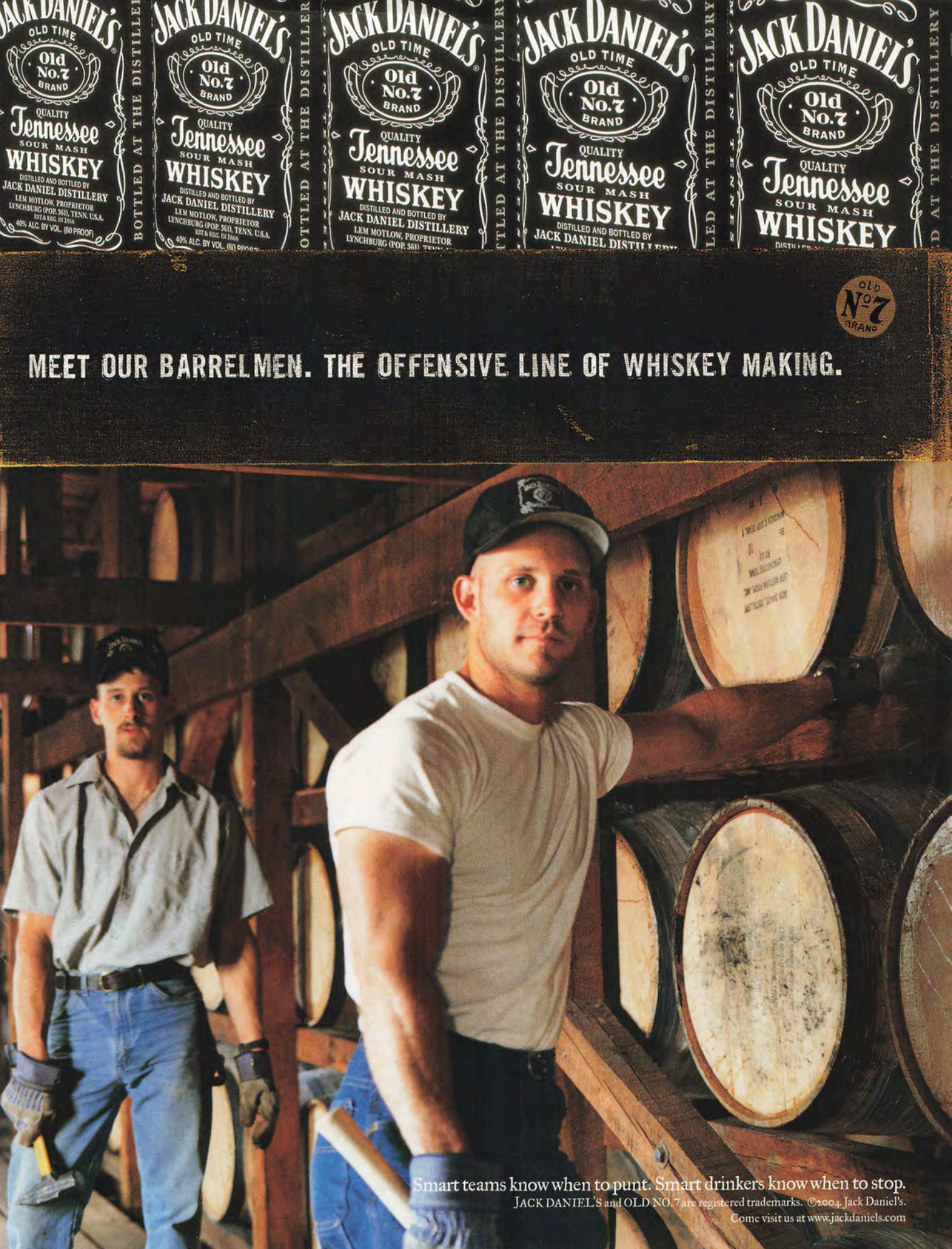
At a lunch I meet Steven Tyler (43) and his four bandmates, who must be famous to somebody, right (47)? O.K., so I'm getting desperate. I count two people who've been famous for only 14 minutes: Leon, the spoiled jock from the Budweiser commercials, and the *My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiancé* guy (49), who seems as surprised as anyone to be having a free week at the Super Bowl.

One more for 50. It's nearly kickoff. And that's when I see him, leaning against a pillar, talking to nobody, the Yugo of celebrities: Kato Kaelin.

Five-oh. Super Bowl L. I dare you to break it this weekend. And no fair counting Star Jones as two. □

If you have a comment for Rick Reilly, send it to **reilly@siletters.com**.

PETER READ MILLER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